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A
COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY.

BY JARED SPARKS.

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TRACTS
OF THE
EVER MEMORABLE JOHN HALES;
WITH
SELECTIONS FROM HIS WORKS.



JOHN HALES.

JOHN HALES, whose singular talents and learning have procured him by common consent the title of the EVER MEMORABLE, was one of that class of scholars, who contrive to pass unnoticed through life, but who leave behind them a name that cannot be hidden, and that never will cease to shine as a bright star amid the constellations of human genius and attainment. He was born at Bath in the year 1584, and was instructed in the elementary branches of learning at a grammar school in his native city. His biographers represent him as having been early distinguished for quickness of parts, and proficiency in his studies; of which facts it is sufficient proof, that when thirteen years old he was prepared for the University, and at that age was entered a student of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The regular course of the University was passed through by him with signal success, and his academical exercises were of so high an order, when he took his first degree in the arts, that he attracted the particular attention of his superiors.

It was his good fortune, by these evidences of talent and scholarship, to gain the notice and the kind patronage of Sir Henry Savile, by whose influence he was encouraged to stand for a vacant fellowship in Merton College, of which Sir Henry was Warden. The examination was rigid, and the contest between the several competitors severe, but Hales passed through the ordeal, and came off with the honourable distinction of gaining the first place in the election. Anthony Wood says, with somewhat of an extravagant panegyric, that as on this occasion, "he showed himself a person of learning above his age and standing, so through the whole course of his bachelorship, there was never any one in the memory of man, that ever went beyond him for subtle disputations in philosophy, for his eloquent declamations and orations, as also for his exact knowledge in the Greek tongue."* Allowing a little for exaggeration here, it cannot be doubted that the compliment to his Greek learning is strictly correct, when it is known that Sir Henry Savile employed him in preparing his edition of Chrysostom's works for the press. This task was executed with so much ability, that he was appointed Greek lecturer in Merton College, and in 1612 advanced to the office of public lecturer in the University.

The next year he was called to perform a duty of some interest and difficulty, in pronouncing a funeral

* Athenae Oxonienses, Vol. II. Col 199. Second Edition.

oration at the interment of Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library. This performance was in Latin, and although it was necessarily composed in haste, it is written in a style of pure and elegant latinity, its sentiments are dignified, and its topics well chosen and well ordered for the occasion. This was a prelude to his being admitted fellow of Eton College, which occurred during that year. He had already taken orders in the church, and begun to be known as a preacher of eminence, but rather, as it would seem, by the power and richness of his discourses, than by any peculiar attractions of person, voice, or manner. What Wood says of his "eloquent declamations," hardly accords with his own account of himself at a later period, in the exordium to a sermon which he preached at St Paul's Cross. He there introduces himself with so much modesty, and makes so direct a reference to his qualifications as a preacher, that I shall be pardoned for quoting his words. He begins his sermon as follows. "Might it so have pleased God, that I had in my power the choice of my ways, and the free government of my actions, I had not this day been *seen*, (for so I think I may better speak—*seen* may I be of many, but to be *heard* with any latitude and compass, my natural imperfection doth quite cut off—) I had not, I say, in this place this day been seen. Ambition of great and famous auditories I leave to those, whose better gifts and inward endowments are admonitions unto them of

the great good they can do, or otherwise thirst after popular applause. Unto myself I have evermore applied that of St Jerom; a small, a private, a retired auditory better accords both with my will and my abilities. Those, unto whose discretion the furniture of this place is committed, ought especially to be careful, since you come hither to hear, to provide you those who can be heard; for the neglect of this one circumstance, how poor soever it may seem to be, is no less than to offend against that 'faith which cometh by hearing,' and to frustrate, as much as in them is, that end for which these meetings were ordained. We that come to this place, as God came to Elias in the mount, in a soft and still voice to those which are near us, unto the rest we are but statues. Such, therefore, as my imperfection in this kind shall offend, and such as this day are my *spectators* only, know, I trust, whom they are to blame." From this description, it would seem at least, that the author had no very high opinion of his own external qualifications for an engaging speaker.

One of the most remarkable incidents in the life of Hales, was his presence at the famous Synod of Dort, in 1618. He went out to Holland in the capacity of chaplain to Sir Dudley Carlton, Ambassador to that country, and through his influence obtained an introduction to Bogerman, president of the Synod, and admission to all the public sittings of that body. He was a critical observer of what passed there, and

wrote almost every day to Sir Dudley, describing minutely the proceedings, and remarking freely on the purposes and doings of the principal actors. These letters are now extant, and published in the author's works. They are written in a candid and temperate spirit, but they too often betray a constraint on the part of the writer, a caution which the subject did not deserve, and an evident disposition to smooth over harsh things, and exhibit the fairest side of a narrative, which in its full and true features could reflect no credit on the cause of religion, or the moderation and good sense of the assembled divines. It must be remembered, however, that Hales went to the Synod with strong Calvinistic predilections, and equally strong prejudices against the Remonstrants, and under these circumstances it was natural, that the ill treatment received by Episcopius and his friends should not appear in so glaring a light, as it would otherwise have done. But notwithstanding his opinions of passing events, as expressed in these letters, his sentiments were completely changed in the end. He went to the Synod a Calvinist; he left it an Arminian, as he afterwards acknowledged.* The elo-

* The following is an extract from a letter of Mr Farindon, the friend of Hales, published by Bishop Pearson in the preface to the *Golden Remains*. "I am very glad to hear," says Mr Farindon, "that you have gained those letters into your hands written from the Synod of Dort; you may please to take notice, that in his younger days he was a Calvinist; and even

quent and earnest manner with which Episcopius defended his cause, in the face of a restless and overbearing majority, his clear and intelligible mode of interpreting the Scriptures, his resolute assertion of christian right and liberty, his serious deportment and the power of his reasoning, these made a deep impression on the mind of Hales, an impression which ever after remained. He studied the principles of the Arminians, was convinced of their general truth, and continued firm in this persuasion through life.

The extraordinary and reprehensible conduct of the Synod, in expelling the Remonstrants, is well described by Balcanqual, the commissioner present for the Scottish Church. Writing on this subject from Dort at the time, he says, "The confusion here in handling of business is very great, they don't know how to put any thing to committees to agree of business, and then afterward to propound it to the Synod to be approved or disapproved, which hath been the custom observed in all councils and synods; but nothing is known till it be propounded in the Synod, and then there are almost as many several voices as

then, when he was employed by the Synod, and at the well pressing of John iii. 16. by Episcopius—"Here I bid John Calvin good night"—as he has often told me."

It is also related by Dr. Walker, "that a friend of Hales, finding him one day reading Calvin's Institutes, asked him if he was not past that book? To which he answered, 'In my younger days I read it to inform myself, but now I read it to reform him.'" *Biog. Brit. Art. Hales.*

heads." The Scotch commissioner then goes on to speak of the manner in which the Remonstrants were dismissed from the Synod, by a partial and unfair vote, for what he calls "the late acts of their incredible obstinacy," (which means their determination to claim equal privileges with the other members of the assembly, and not submit to the catechising attempted to be practised upon them by the other party,) after which he adds, "they were called in, and dismissed with such a powdering speech, as I doubt not your lordship hath heard with grief enough; I protest I am much afflicted when I think of it; for if the Remonstrants should write, that the president pronounced a sentence, which was not the sentence of the Synod, they should not lie." This is expressive language, and shows the spirit with which the leading members of that celebrated body were moved. The Remonstrants, or Arminians, desired to meet their opponents on equal terms, that is, to enter into a mutual discussion of the points of difference; this was denied them; the supposed articles of their faith were drawn up in the nature of charges, and they were called on to acknowledge or reject them at once. Questions were strung together, and direct answers demanded without allowing them in turn to ask similar questions, and require similar answers. At this unfair dealing they were very justly indignant; they did not come there to be catechised by a captious majority, but to hold an honourable part in expressing and defending their

sentiments they were ready to deliberate, but not to confess it a crime to believe what they thought to be truth ; they wished to reason on the disputed doctrines, to exercise a mutual toleration, and to show the grounds of their faith from the Scriptures, but were not prepared to submit quietly to dictation from persons, who had no authority over them. These terms were too energetic, and too nicely balanced in the scales of equity, to suit the prejudices of the opposite party ; they produced the censure of “incredible obstinacy,” and at length the expulsion of the Remonstrants from the Synod. Happily rid of this annoyance, all things went smoothly on till the end of the session, and it was gravely voted and recorded in the Synod of Dort, as all the world knows, that predestination and the other five points of Calvinism are the main pillars of the christian fabric.

As to our author’s opinions on some of the debated doctrines of religion, they cannot from his writings be precisely ascertained. His free mode of discoursing on some occasions brought him under the censure of Socinianism, but without any probable foundation. It is certain, indeed, that he professed a belief in the trinity, and he has written what he calls a *Confession* of that mystery. This Confession is a most extraordinary performance, it is true ; nothing can be more dark, mysterious, or unintelligible, unless it be Bishop Beveridge’s enigmatical account of the trinity ; but there is no room for doubting, that Hales was in some

sense a sincere trinitarian, although he was for a time considered the author of two works in Latin, which were actually written by two Polish Unitarians, Stegmannus and Przypcovius. The reason why this opinion found its way abroad, is by Des Maizeaux ascribed to the circumstance, that the sentiments in these two treatises accord with those well known to have been entertained by Hales, such as the propriety of "having no rule of faith, but the Scripture explained according to sound reason, and allowing all christian communions an equal right to interpret the Scripture to the best of their judgment, and to order their government and discipline accordingly." Heylin was among the foremost to find Socinianism in these sentiments, and to promulgate the charge to the disadvantage of our uthor, who seems never to have paid any regard to it. He wrote nothing in his defence, aware, probably, that if opinions like these subjected him to the opprobrium of Socinianism, it would be in vain to combat the credulity which should believe, or the obstinacy which should uphold such an accusation.

After his return from Holland, he lived in a very retired manner in his College, and during a period of many years scarcely an incident of his life is transmitted. His famous tract on *Schism* was written at this time, for the particular use of Mr Chillingworth, who was his intimate friend. This tract was not intended for publication, and a copy of it was put to press and circulated without the author's knowledge.

It fell into the hands of Archbishop Laud, on whom it made such an impression, that he sent for Mr Hales, and held a very long interview and discussion with him at Lambeth. The Archbishop thought the spirit of the tract hostile to the established church, and laboured to bring back the author from his errors. He did not succeed, however, in changing the mind, or daunting the independence of Hales; but the interview had the good effect to acquaint the prelate with the singular simplicity of character, modesty, and integrity of the man, whose opinions he could not approve, and whose great powers he would gladly have employed in supporting a different cause. The Archbishop was so well pleased with his sincerity, in addition to the profound respect he had for his talents and learning, that he offered him any preferment, which he might choose. This offer Mr Hales at first declined, replying to the Archbishop, "If it please your Grace, I have what I desire;" but in the following year, 1639, the Canonry of Windsor was presented to him in such a manner, that he could not without much impropriety refuse to accept it. He was accordingly installed in that office, which he held only two years, when the civil wars broke out.

Mr Hales had learnt, that Archbishop Laud was not pleased with the tract on Schism, before he sent for him to converse on the subject, and he addressed to him a letter in vindication of the grounds he had there taken. Both these remarkable per-

formances contain passages, which strikingly illustrate the author's habits of thinking, and the tendency of his studies, but as they will both be printed at large in the following selection, it is not necessary to quote detached parts in this place. One paragraph, however, in the Letter to Laud, it would be improper to omit in a notice of the author's life. Speaking of the tract, he observes; "Now concerning the things discussed in the pamphlet, I humbly beg leave, before I come to particulars, to speak for myself thus much in general. If they be errors which I have here vented, as perchance they are, yet my will hath no part in them, and they are but the issues of unfortunate inquiry. Galen, that great physician, speaks thus of himself, 'I know not how,' says that worthy person, 'even from my youth up, in a wonderful manner, whether by divine inspiration, or by fury and possession, or however you may please to style it, I have much contemned the opinion of the many; but truth and knowledge, I have above measure affected, verily persuading myself, that a fairer, more divine fortune could never befall a man.' Some title, some claim I may justly lay to the words of this excellent person; for the pursuit of truth hath been my only care, ever since I first understood the meaning of the word. For this, I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires, which might bias me, and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this, I have spent my money, my means, my youth, my age, and all I have;

that I might remove from myself that censure of Tertullian,—*Suo vitio quis quid ignorat?* If, with all this cost and pains, my purchase is but error, I may safely say, to err hath cost me more, than it has many to find the truth; and truth itself shall give me this testimony at last, that if I have missed of her, it is not my fault, but my misfortune.

“And, *first*, however I have miscast some parcels of my account, yet I am most certain that the total sum is right; for it amounts to no more than that precept of the Apostle,—‘As far as it is possible, have peace with all men.’ For this purpose, having summoned up sundry occasions of schism, and valuing them with the best judgment I could, I still ended with advice to all possible accommodation and communion, one only excepted. Now certainly there could be no great harm in the premises, where the conclusion was nothing else but peace.”

Mr Hales experienced great inconvenience from the political commotions, which succeeded the year 1642. He remained firm to the royalist party, refused the Covenant, and was finally expelled from his fellowship, because he would not take the Engagement, or the oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth. He was now thrown on the world, advanced in age, and narrow in circumstances. The place of private tutor with a small salary in a lady’s family was offered him, which he accepted. This quiet retreat he was not suffered long to enjoy. A decree was pub-

lished, forbidding all persons to harbour Malignants, as the Royalists were termed, and Hales thought it a measure of prudence justly due to his employer, not to subject her to a violation of this decree, by affording him an asylum in her house. His last retreat was a lodging in Eton, at the dwelling of a poor woman, whose husband had formerly been his servant. He was obliged to sell a large portion of his library, at a price much below its original cost, to maintain himself even in this obscurity. He died on the 16th of May, 1636, aged 72 years, and was buried in the churchyard of Eton College.

The following is the Earl of Clarendon's account of this distinguished scholar and divine.

“Mr John Hales had been Greek Professor in the University of Oxford; and had borne the greatest part of the labour of that excellent edition and impression of St Chrysostom's works, set out by Sir Harry Savile; who was then warden of Merton College, when the other was fellow of that house. He was chaplain in the house with Sir Dudley Carleton, ambassador at the Hague in Holland, at the time when the Synod of Dort was held, and so had liberty to be present at the consultations in that assembly; and hath left the best memorial behind him, of the ignorance, and passion, and animosity, and injustice of that covention; of which he often made very pleasant relations; though, at that time, it received too much countenance from England. Being a person

of the greatest eminency for learning and other abilities, from which he might have promised himself any preferment in the church, he withdrew himself from all pursuits of that kind, into a private fellowship in the College of Eton, where his friend Sir Harry Savile was provost; where he lived amongst his books, and the most separated from the world of any man then living; though he was not in the least degree inclined to melancholy, but, on the contrary, of a very open and pleasant conversation; and therefore was very well pleased with the resort of his friends to him, who were such as he had chosen, and in whose company he delighted, and for whose sake he would sometimes, once in a year, resort to London, only to enjoy their cheerful conversation.

“He would never take any cure of souls, and was so great a contemner of money, that he was wont to say, ‘That his fellowship, and the bursar’s place, (which, for the good of the College, he held many years,) was worth to him fifty pounds a year more than he could spend; and yet, besides his being very charitable to poor people, even to liberality, he had made a greater and better collection of books, than were to be found in any other private library that I have seen; as he had sure read more, and carried more about him, in his excellent memory, than any man I ever knew, my Lord Falkland only excepted, who I think sided him. He had, whether from his natural temper and constitution, or from his long re-

tirement from all crowds, or from his profound judgment and discerning spirit, contracted some opinions, which were not received, nor by him published except in private discourses ; and then rather upon occasion of dispute, than of positive opinion ; and he would often say, his opinions he was sure did him no harm, but he was far from being confident, that they might not do others harm, who entertained them, and and might entertain other results from them than he did ; and therefore he was very reserved in communicating what he thought himself in those points, in which he differed from what was received.

“ Nothing troubled him more, than the brawls which were grown from religion ; and he therefore exceedingly detested the tyranny of the church of Rome, more for their imposing uncharitably upon the consciences of other men, than for the errors in their own opinions ; and would often say, that he would renounce the religion of the church of England tomorrow, if it obliged him to believe that any other Christians should be damned ; and that no body would conclude another man to be damned, who did not wish him so. No man more strict and severe to himself ; to other men so charitable as to their opinions, that he thought that other men were more in fault for their carriage towards them, than the men themselves were, who erred ; and he thought that pride, and passion, more than conscience, were the cause of all separation from each other’s communion ;

and he frequently said, that that only kept the world from agreeing upon such a liturgy, as might bring them into one communion ; all doctrinal points upon which men differed in their opinions being to have no place in any liturgy."

Bishop Pearson first collected and published the author's works in one volume quarto, entitled the *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable John Hales*, in the preface to which he thus describes his manners and character.

"I shall speak no more than my own long experience, intimate acquaintance, and high veneration grounded upon both, shall freely and sincerely prompt me to. Mr John Hales, sometime Greek Professor of the University of Oxford, long fellow of Eton College, and, at last, also prebendary of Windsor, was a man, I think, of as great a sharpness, quickness, and subtilty of wit, as ever this or perhaps any nation bred. His industry did strive, if it were possible, to equal the largeness of his capacity, whereby he became as great a master of polite, various and universal learning, as ever yet conversed with books. Proportionate to his reading was his meditation, which furnished him with a judgment beyond the vulgar reach of man, built upon unordinary notions, raised out of strange observations, and comprehensive thoughts within himself. So that he really was a most prodigious example of an accute and piercing wit, of a vast and illimited knowledge, of a severe and profound judgment.

“Although this may seem, as in itself it truly is, a grand elogium, yet I cannot esteem him less in any thing which belongs to a good man, than in those intellectual perfections; and had he never understood a letter, he had other ornaments sufficient to endear him. For he was of a nature, as we ordinarily speak, so kind, so sweet, so courting all mankind, of an affability so prompt, so ready to receive all conditions of men, that I conceive it near as easy a task for any one to become so knowing, as so obliging.

“As a Christian, none more ever acquainted with the nature of the Gospel, because none more studious of the knowledge of it, or more curious in the search, which being strengthened by those great advantages before mentioned, could not prove otherwise than highly effectual. He took, indeed, to himself a liberty of judging, not of others, but for himself; and if ever any man might be allowed in these matters to judge, it was he, who had so long, so much, so advantageously considered; and which is more, never could be said to have had the least worldly design in his determinations. He was not only most truly and strictly just in his secular transactions, most exemplary meek and humble, notwithstanding his perfections, but beyond all example charitable, giving unto all, preserving nothing but his books, to continue his learning and himself.

“This testimony may be truly given of his person, and nothing in it liable to the least exception, but this

alone, that it comes far short of him. Which intimation I conceive more necessary for such as knew him not, than all which has been said."

The works of Hales consist of Tracts, Essays, Sermons, and Letters. Except the Tract on Schism, the Letter to Laud, and one or two Sermons, the author printed nothing during his lifetime, and his writings have of course appeared before the public with all the disadvantage of posthumous publications. They have in different shapes passed through several editions, the most complete and valuable of which is the one printed at Glasgow by Foulis, 1765, in three duodecimo volumes. The present selection follows the text of that edition. Some of the Greek quotations are here omitted, the translation only being retained in the text, with references in the margin to the places in which the original may be found.

A

TRACT

CONCERNING

SCHISM AND SCHISMATICS ;

WHEREIN IS BRIEFLY CONSIDERED THE ORIGINAL
CAUSES OF SCHISM.

HERESY and schism, as they are in common use, are two theological *Μορμωσ*, or scarecrows, which they, who uphold a party in religion, use to fright away such, as making inquiry into it, are ready to relinquish and oppose it, if it appear either erroneous or suspicious. For as Plutarch reports of a painter, who having unskilfully painted a cock, chased away all cocks and hens, that so the imperfection of his art might not appear in comparison with nature ; so men willing for ends to admit of no fancy but their own, endeavor to hinder an inquiry into it by way of comparison of somewhat with it, peradventure truer, that so the deformity of their own might not appear. But howsoever in the common manage, heresy and schism

are but ridiculous terms, yet the things in themselves are of very considerable moment ; the one offending against truth, the other against charity ; and therefore both deadly, where they are not by imputation, but in deed.

It is then a matter of no small importance truly to descry the nature of them, that so they may fear who are guilty of them, and they, on the contrary, strengthen themselves, who through the iniquity of men and times are injuriously charged with them.

Schism, (for of heresy we shall not now treat, except it be by accident, and that by occasion of a general mistake, spread throughout all the writings of the ancients, in which their names are familiarly confounded ;) Schism, I say, upon the very sound of the word, imports division ; division is not, but where communion is, or ought to be. Now communion is the strength and ground of all society, whether sacred or civil. Whosoever therefore they be, that offend against this common society and friendliness of men, and cause separation and breach among them ; if it be in civil occasions, are guilty of sedition or rebellion ; if it be by occasion of ecclesiastical difference, they are guilty of schism. So that schism is an ecclesiastical sedition, as sedition is a lay schism. Yet the great benefit of communion notwithstanding, in regard of divers distempers men are subject to, dissension and disunion are often necessary ; for when either false or uncertain conclusions are obtruded for truth,

and acts either unlawful, or ministering just scruple are required of us to be performed ; in these cases consent were conspiracy, and open contestation is not faction or schism, but due Christian animosity.

For the further opening therefore of the nature of schism, something must be added by way of difference, to distinguish it from necessary separation ; and that is, that the causes, upon which division is attempted, proceed not from passion or distemper, or from ambition or avarice, or such other ends as human folly is apt to pursue ; but from well weighed and necessary reasons, and that, when all other means having been tried, nothing will serve to save us from guilt of conscience, but open separation. So that schism, if we would define it, is nothing else but an unnecessary separation of christians from that part of the visible church, of which they were once members. Now as in mutinies and civil dissensions there are two attendants in ordinary belonging unto them ; one, the choice of one elector or guide in place of the general or ordinary governor, to rule and guide ; the other, the appointing of some public place or rendezvous, where public meetings must be celebrated ; so in church dissensions and quarrels, two appurtenances there are, which serve to make a schism complete.

1. The choice of a bishop, in opposition to the former ; (a thing very frequent amongst the ancients, and which many times was both the cause and effect of schism.)

2. The erecting of a new church and oratory, for the dividing party to meet in publicly ; for till this be done, the schism is but yet in embrio.

In that late famous controversy in Holland, *De prae-destinatione et auxiliis*, as long as the disagreeing parties went no further than disputes and pen-combats, the schism was all that while unhatched ; but as soon as one party swept an old cloyster, and by a pretty art, suddenly made it a church, by putting a new pulpit in it, for the separating party there to meet ; now what before was a controversy, became a formal schism. To know no more than this, if you take it to be true, had been enough to direct how you are to judge, and what to think of schism and schismatics ; yet because in the ancients, by whom many men are more affrighted than hurt, much is said and many fearful dooms are pronounced in this case, will we descend a little to consider schisms, as it were by way of story, and that partly further to open that which we have said in general, by instancing in particulars ; and partly to disabuse those, who reverencing antiquity more than needs, have suffered themselves to be scared with imputation of schism above due measure ; for what the ancients spake by way of censure of schism in general, is most true ; for they saw, (and it is no great matter to see so much,) that unadvisedly, and upon fancy, to break the knot of union betwixt man and man, (especially amongst Christians, upon whom, above all other kind of men, the tie of love and

communion doth most especially rest, was a crime hardly pardonable ; and that nothing absolves a man from the guilt of it, but true and unpretended conscience ; yet when they came to pronounce of schisms in particular, whether it were because of their own interests, or that they saw not the truth, or for what other cause God only doth know, their judgments many times, to speak most gently, are justly to be suspected. Which that you may see, we will range all schism into two ranks.

1. For there is a schism, in which only one party is schismatic ; for where cause of schism is necessary, there not he that separates, but he that occasions the separation, is schismatic.

2. There is a schism, in which both parts are the schismatics ; for where the occasion of separation is unnecessary, neither side can be excused from the guilt of schism.

But you will ask, who shall be the judge what is necessary ? Indeed that is a question which hath been often made, but I think scarcely ever truly answered ; not because it is a point of great depth or difficulty truly to assoil it, but because the true solution carries fire in the tail of it ; for it bringeth with it a piece of doctrine which is seldom pleasing to superiors. To you for the present this shall suffice ; if so be you be *animo defocato*, if you have cleared yourself from froth and grounds ; if neither sloth nor fears, nor ambition, nor any tempting spirits of that

nature abuse you, (for these, and such as these, are the true impediments, why both that and other questions of the like danger are not truly answered,) if all this be, and yet you see not how to frame your resolution, and settle yourself for that doubt ; I will say no more of you than was said of Papias, St John's own scholar, you are "of small judgment," your abilities are not so good as I presumed.

But to go on with what I intended, and from which that interloping question diverted me ; that you may the better judge of the nature of schisms by their occasions, you shall find that all schisms have crept into the church by one of these three ways ; either upon matter of fact, or matter of opinion, or point of ambition. For the *first* ; I call that matter of fact, when something is required to be done by us, which we either know or strongly suspect to be unlawful. So the first notable schism, of which we read in the church, contained in it matter of fact ; for it being upon error taken for necessary, that an Easter must be kept ; and upon worse than error, if I may so speak, for it was no less than a point of Judaism forced upon the church, upon worse than error, I say, thought further necessary, that the ground for the time of our keeping that feast, must be the rule left by Moses to the Jews ; there arose a stout question, Whether we were to celebrate with the Jews on the fourteenth moon, or the Sunday following ? This matter, though most unnecessary, most vain, yet

caused as great a combustion as ever was in the church ; the West separating and refusing communion with the East many years together. In this fantastical hurry, I cannot see but all the world were schismatics ; neither can any thing excuse them from that imputation, excepting only this, that we charitably suppose that all parties out of conscience did what they did. A thing which befel them through the ignorance of their guides, for I will not say their malice, and that through the just judgment of God, because through sloth and blind obedience men examined not the things which they were taught, but, like beasts of burden, patiently couched down, and indifferently underwent whatsoever their superiors laid upon them. By the way, by this you may plainly see, the danger of our appeal to antiquity, for resolution in controverted points of faith, and how small relief we are to expect from thence ; for if the discretion of the chiefest guides and directors of the church, did in a point so trivial, so inconsiderable, so mainly fail them, as not to see the truth in a subject, wherein it is the greatest marvel how they could avoid the sight of it ; can we, without imputation of extreme grossness and folly, think so poor spirited persons competent judges of the questions now on foot betwixt the churches ? Pardon me, I know not what temptation drew that note from me.

The next schism, which had in it matter of fact, is that of the Donatist : who was persuaded, at least so

he pretended, that it was unlawful to converse or communicate in holy duties with men stained with any notorious sin. For howsoever Austin and others do specify only the *Thurificati et Traditores*, and *Libellatici*, and the like, as if he separated only from those whom he found to be such; yet, by necessary proportion, he must refer to all notorious sinners. Upon this he taught, that in all places where good and bad were mixed together, there could be no church, by reason of pollution, evaporating as it were from sinners, which blasted righteous persons who conversed with them, and made all unclean. On this ground, separating himself from all whom he list to suspect, he gave out that the church was no where to be found but in him and his associates, as being the only men among whom wicked persons found no shelter; and by consequence the only clean and unpolluted company, and therefore the only church. Against this, St Augustine laid down this conclusion, *Unitatem ecclesiae per totum orbem dispersae propter nonnullorum peccata non esse deserendam**; which is indeed the whole sum of that father's disputation against the Donatist. Now in one part of this controversy betwixt St Augustine and the Donatist, there is one thing very remarkable; the truth was there, where it was by mere chance, and might have been on

* The substance, though not the words, of this sentence, is to be found in various passages of the Epistles of Augustine.

either side, any reasons brought by either party notwithstanding ; for though it were *de facto* false, that *pars Donati*, shut up in Afric, was the only orthodox party, yet it might have been true, notwithstanding any thing St Austin brings to confute it ; and on the contrary, though it were *de facto* true, that the part of Christians dispersed over the earth were orthodox ; yet it might have been false, notwithstanding any thing St Austin brings to confirm it. For where, or amongst whom, or amongst how many the church shall be, or is, is a thing indifferent ; it may be in any number, more or less ; it may be in any place, country, or nation ; it may be in all, and, for ought I know, it may be in none, without any prejudice to the definition of the church, or the truth of the Gospel. North or South, many or few, dispersed in many places, or confined to one ; none of these either prove or disprove a church.

Now this schism, and likewise the former, to a wise man that well understands the matter in controversy, may afford perchance matter of pity, to see men so strangely distracted upon fancy ; but of doubt or trouble what to do, it can yield none. For though in this schism the Donatist be the schismatic, and in the former both parties be equally engaged in the schism ; yet you may safely upon your occasions communicate with either, so be you flatter neither in their schism. For why might it not be lawful to go to church with the Donatist, or to celebrate Easter

with the Quartodeciman, if occasion so require? Since neither nature, nor religion, nor reason doth suggest any thing to the contrary; for in all public meetings pretending holiness, so there be nothing done, but what true devotion and piety brook, why may not I be present in them, and use communication with them? Nay, what if those, to whose care the execution of the public service is committed, do something either unseemly or suspicious, or peradventure unlawful? What if the garments they wear be censured as, nay indeed be, superstitious? What if the gesture of adoration be used at the altar, as now we have learned to speak? What if the Homilist, or preacher, deliver any doctrine, of the truth of which we are not well persuaded, a thing which very often falls out, yet for all this we may not separate, except we be constrained personally to bear a part in them ourselves. The priests under Eli had so ill demeaned themselves about the daily sacrifice, that the Scriptures tell us, they made it an offence; yet the people refused not to come to the tabernacle, nor to bring their sacrifice to the priest. For in these schisms, which concern fact, nothing can be a just cause of refusal of communion, but only to require the execution of some unlawful or suspected act; for not only in reason, but in religion too, that maxim admits of no release; *Cautissimi cujusque præceptum, quod dubitas, ne feceris*. Long it was ere the church fell upon schism upon this occasion, though of late it

hath had very many; for until the second council of Nice, in which conciliabule superstition and ignorance did conspire, I say, until that rout did set up image-worship, there was not any remarkable schism, upon just occasion of fact; all the rest of schisms of that kind were but wantonness, this was truly serious. In this the schismatical party was the synod itself, and such as conspired with it. For concerning the use of images *in sacris*; *first*, it is acknowledged by all, that it is not a thing necessary; *secondly*, it is by most suspected; *thirdly*, it is by many held utterly unlawful. Can then the enjoining of the practice of such a thing be ought else but abuse; or can the refusal of communion here, be thought any other thing than duty? Here, or upon the like occasion, to separate, may peradventure bring personal trouble and danger, against which it concerns every honest man to have *pectus bene praeparatum*, furtlier harm it cannot do. So that in these cases, you cannot be to seek what to think, or what you have to do.

Come we then to consider a little of the *second* sort of schism, arising upon occasion of variety of opinion. It hath been the common disease of Christians from the beginning, not to content themselves with that measure of faith, which God and the Scriptures have expressly afforded us; but out of a vain desire to know more than is revealed, they have attempted to discuss things, of which we can have no light, neither from reason, nor revelation; neither

have they rested here, but upon pretence of church-authority, which is none, or tradition, which for the most part is but figment ; they have peremptorily concluded, and confidently imposed upon others, a necessity of entertaining conclusions of that nature ; and to strengthen themselves, have broken out into divisions and factions, opposing man to man, synod to synod, till the peace of the church vanished, without all possibility of recall. Hence arose those ancient and many separations amongst Christians occasioned by Arianism, Eutychianism, Nestorianism, Photinianism, Sabellianism, and many more both ancient, and in our time ; all which indeed are but names of schism, howsoever in the common language of the fathers, they were called heresies. For heresy is an act of the will, not of reason ; and is indeed a lie, not a mistake ; else how could that known speech of Austin go for true ; *Errare possum, haereticus esse nolo ?* Indeed, Manichaeism, Valentianism, Marcionism, Mahometanism, are truly and properly heresies ; for we know that the authors of them received them not, but minted them themselves, and so knew that which they taught to be a lie.

But can any man avouch that Arius and Nestorius, and others that taught erroneously concerning the Trinity, or the person of our Saviour, did maliciously invent what they taught, and not rather fall upon it by error or mistake ? Till that be done, and that upon good evidence, we will think no worse of all

parties than needs we must, and take these rents in the church to be, at the worst, but schisms upon matter of opinion. In which case what we are to do, is not a point of any great depth of understanding to discover, so be distemper and partiality do not intervene. I do not yet see, that *opinionum varietas, et opinantium unitas*, are *ἀσυνετα*, or that men of different opinions in the Christian religion, may not hold communion *in sacris*, and both go to one church. Why may I not go, if occasion require, to an Arian church, so there be no Arianism expressed in their liturgy? And were liturgies and public forms of service so framed, as that they admitted not of particular and private fancies, but contained only such things, as in which all Christians do agree, schisms on opinion were utterly vanished. For consider of all the liturgies that are or ever have been, and remove from them whatever is scandalous to any party, and leave nothing but what all agree on; and the event shall be, that the public service and honor of God shall no ways suffer; whereas to load our public forms with the private fancies upon which we differ, is the most sovereign way to perpetuate schism unto the world's end. Prayer, confession, thanksgiving, reading of Scriptures, exposition of Scripture, administration of sacraments in the plainest and simplest manner, were matter enough to furnish out a sufficient liturgy, though nothing either of private opinion, or church pomp, of garments, of prescribed gestures, of im-

agery, of music, of matter concerning the dead, of many superfluities, which creep into the churches under the name of order and decency, did interpose itself. For to charge churches and liturgies with things unnecessary, was the first beginning of all superstition ; and when scruples of conscience began to be made or pretended, then schisms began to break in. If the spiritual guides and fathers of the church would be a little sparing of incumbering churches with superfluities, and not over rigid, either in reviving obsolete customs, or imposing new, there were far less danger of schism or superstition ; and all the inconvenience were likely to ensue, would be but this, they should in so doing yield a little to the imbecilities of inferiors, a thing which St Paul would never have refused to do. Mean while, wheresoever false or suspected opinions are made a piece of the church liturgy, he that separates is not the schismatic ; for it is alike unlawful to make profession of known or suspected falsehoods, as to put in practice unlawful or suspected actions.

The *third* thing I noted for matter of schism was ambition ; I mean episcopal ambition ; shewing itself especially in two heads ; one concerning plurality of bishops in the same see ; another the superiority of bishops in divers sees. Aristotle tells us, “ That necessity causeth but small faults, but avarice and ambition were the mothers of great crimes.” Episcopal ambition hath made this true ; for no occasion hath pro-

duced more frequent, more continuing, more sanguinary schisms than this hath done. The sees of Alexandria, of Constantinople, of Antioch, and above all of Rome, do abundantly shew thus much; and our ecclesiastical stories witness no less, of which the greatest part consists in the factionating and tumultuating of great and potent bishops. Socrates, apologizing for himself, that professing to write an ecclesiastical story, he did oftentimes interlace the actions of secular princes and other civil businesses, tells us that he did thus to refresh his readers, who otherwise were in danger to be cloyed by reading so much of the acts of unquiet and unruly bishops, *εν οἷς κατ' ἀλλήλων τυρρευσαν*, in which, as a man might say, they made butter and cheese one of another; for *τυρρευειν* (that I may shew you a cast out of my old office, and open you a mystery in grammar,) properly signifieth to make butter and cheese; now because these are not made without much agitation of the milk, hence, *τυρρευειν*, by a borrowed and translated signification, signifies to do things with much agitation and tumult.

But that I may a little consider of the two heads, which I but now specified; the *first* I mentioned was the plurality of bishops in one see. For the general practice of the church from the beginning, at least since the original of episcopacy, as now it is, was never to admit at once more than one bishop in one see; and so far in this point have they been careful to preserve unity, that they would not suffer a bishop in

his see, to have two cathedral churches ; which thing lately brought us a book out of France, *De Monogamia Episcoporum*, written by occasion of the bishop of Langres, who, I know not upon what fancy, could not be content with one cathedral church in his diocess, but would needs have two ; which to the author of that work seems to be a kind of spiritual polygamy. It fell out amongst the ancients very often, sometimes upon occasion of difference in opinion, sometimes because of difference amongst those who were interested in the choice of bishops, that two bishops and sometimes more were set up ; and all parties striving to maintain their own bishop, made themselves several churches, several congregations, each refusing to participate with others, and many times proceeding to mutual excommunication. This is that which Cyprian calls *Erigere altare contra altare*, “ to rear altar against altar ;” to this doth he impute the original of all church disorders ; and if you read him, you would think he thought no other church tumult to be a schism but this. This perchance might plead some excuse ; for though in regard of religion itself, it matters not whether there be one or more bishops in the same diocess, and sometimes two are known to have sat at once, (for Epiphanius, reckoning up the bishops of Rome, makes Peter and Paul the first ; and St Austin acknowledgeth, that for a time he sat fellow-bishop with his predecessor, though he excuseth it, that he did so by being ignorant that the contrary had

been decreed by the council of Nice,*) yet it being a thing very convenient for the peace of the church to have it so ; neither doth it in any way savour of vice or misdemeanour ; their punishment sleeps not, who unnecessarily and wantonly go about to infringe it.

But that *other* head of episcopal ambition, concerning supremacy of bishops in divers sees, one claiming superiority over another, as it hath been from time to time a great trespasser against the church's peace, so it is now the final ruin of it ; the East and the West, through the fury of the two prime bishops, being irremediably separated without all hope of reconciliation. And besides all this mischief, it is founded in a vice contrary to all Christian humility, without which no man shall see his Saviour ; for they do but abuse themselves and others, that would persuade us that bishops, by Christ's institution, have any superiority over other men, further than of reverence ; or that any bishop is superior to another, further than positive order agreed upon amongst Christians hath prescribed. For we have believed him that hath told us, that in Jesus Christ there is neither high nor low ; and that in giving honour, every man should be ready to prefer another before himself. Rom. xii. 10 ; which saying cuts off all claim most certainly to superiority, by title of Christianity ; except men can think that these things were spoken only to poor and

* Epis. ccxiii. §. 4.

private men. Nature and religion agree in this, that neither of them hath a hand in this heraldry of *secundum, sub et supra*; all this comes from composition and agreement of men among themselves. Wherefore this abuse of Christianity, to make it lacquey to ambition, is a vice, for which I have no extraordinary name of ignominy, and an ordinary I will not give it, lest you should take so transcendant a vice to be but trivial.

Now concerning schisms arising upon these heads, you cannot be for behaviour much to seek; for you may safely communicate with all parties, as occasion shall call you; and the schismatics here are all those who are heads of the faction, together with all those who foment it; for private and indifferent persons, they may be spectators of these contentions as securely in regard of any peril of conscience, (for of danger in purse or person, I keep no account,) as at a cock-fight. Where serpents fight, who care who hath the better? The best wish is, that both may perish in the fight.

Now for conventicles, of the nature of which you desire to be informed; thus much in general. It evidently appears, that all meetings upon unnecessary occasions are to be so styled; so that in this sense, a conventicle is nothing else but a congregation of schismatics; yet time hath taken leave sometimes to fix this name upon good and honest meetings, and that perchance not altogether without good reason;

for with public religious meetings, thus it fares. First, it hath been at all times confessed necessary, that God requires not only inward and private devotion, when men either in their hearts and closets, or within their private walls, pray, praise, confess and acknowledge ; but he further requires all those things to be done in public, by troops and shoals of men ; and from hence have proceeded public temples, altars, forms of service, appointed times, and the like, which are required for open assemblies. Yet, while men were truly pious, all meetings of men for mutual help of piety and devotion, wheresoever and by whomsoever celebrated, were permitted without exception.

But when it was espied, that ill affected persons abused private meetings, whether religious or civil, to evil ends, religiousness to gross impiety, (as appears in the Etlmic Eleusinia, and Bacchanalia ; and Christian meetings under the pagan princes, when for fear, they durst not come together in open view, were charged with foul imputations, as by the report of Christians themselves, plainly appears ; and civil meetings many times, under pretence of friendly and neighbourly visits, sheltered treasonable attempts against princes and commonweals ;) hence both church and state joined, and jointly gave orders for forms, times, places of public concourse, whether for religious or civil ends ; and all other meetings whatsoever, besides those of which both time and place were limited, they censured for routs and riots, and

unlawful assemblies in the state, and in the church for conventicles.

So that it is not lawful, no not for prayer, for hearing, for conference, for any other religious office whatsoever, for people to assemble otherwise, than by public order is allowed. Neither may we complain of this in times of incorruption; for why should men desire to do that suspiciously in private, which warrantably may be performed in public? But in times of manifest corruptions and persecutions, wherein religious assembling is dangerous, private meetings, howsoever, besides public order, are not only lawful, but they are of necessity a duty; else how shall we excuse the meetings of Christians for public service, in time of danger and persecutions, and of ourselves in Queen Mary's days? And how will those of the Roman church amongst us put off the imputation of conventicling, who are known amongst us privately to assemble for religious exercise, against all established order, both in church and state? For indeed all pious assemblies in times of persecution and corruption, howsoever practised, are indeed, or rather alone the lawful congregations; and public assemblies, though according to form of law, are indeed nothing else but riots and conventicles, if they be stained with corruption and superstition.

A
LETTER
TO
ARCHBISHOP LAUD,
OCCASIONED BY THE TRACT CONCERNING
SCHISM.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

WHEREAS of late an abortive discourse, indited by me for the use of a private friend, hath without lawful pass wandered abroad, and, mistaking its way, is arrived at your Grace's hands; I have taken the boldness to present myself before you, in behalf of it, with this either apology or excuse indifferently, being resolved *in utramvis alean*, to beg either your approbation, or your pardon. For myself, I have much marvelled, whence a scribbled paper, dropt from so worthless and inconsiderable a hand as mine, should recover so much strength, as to be able to give offence. But I confess it to be most true, that *Bellum inchoant inertes, fortes finiunt*; and a weak hand often kindles

that fire, which the concurrence of the whole vicinity cannot quench. If therefore any fire can arise out of so poor a spark, which I can hardly conceive, I am myself here at hand to pour on water, to prevent a further mischief.

Whatsoever there is in that schedule, which may seem apt to give offence, consists either in phrase and manner of expression, or in the conceits and things themselves, there pressed and insisted upon. For the first, whosoever hath the misfortune to read it, shall find in it, for style, some things over familiar, and subrustic; some things more pleasant than needed; some things more sour and satirical. For these, my apology is but this, That your Grace would be pleased to take in consideration, *First*, What the liberty of a letter might entice me to; *Secondly*, I am by genius open and uncautelous, and therefore some pardon might be afforded to harmless freedom, and gaiety of spirit, utterly devoid of all distemper and malignity; *Thirdly*, Some part of the theme I was to touch upon, was, or at least it seemed to me, of so small and inconsiderable a moment, and yet hath raised that noise and tumult in the church, that I confess it drew from me that indignation, which is there expressed. When Augustus the Emperor was asked what was become of his Ajax, (for he made a tragedy upon the life and fortunes of that man,) he answered, *Incubuit in spongiam.** For all these things,

Sueton. Aug. c. 35.

which I have above touched upon, my answer is, *Incumbant in spongiam*. And I could heartily wish, (for in the case I am, I have nothing but good wishes to help me,) that they, into whose hands that paper is unluckily fallen, would favour me so much as to sponge them out.

Now concerning the things discussed in the pamphlet, I humbly beg leave, before I come to particulars, to speak for myself thus much in general. If they be errors which I have here vented, as perchance they are, yet my will hath no part in them, and they are but the issues of unfortunate inquiry. Galen, that great physician, speaks thus of himself; "I know not how," says that worthy person, "even from my youth up, in a wonderful manner, whether by divine inspiration, or by fury and possession, or however you may please to style it, I have much contemned the opinion of the many; but truth and knowledge, I have above measure affected; verily persuading myself, that a fairer, more divine fortune could never befall a man." Some title, some claim, I may justly lay to the words of this excellent person; for the pursuit of truth hath been my only care, ever since I first understood the meaning of the word. For this, I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires, which might bias me, and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this, I have spent my money, my means, my youth, my age, and all I have; that I might remove from myself that censure of Tertullian,—*Suo vitio*

quis quid ignorat? If with all this cost and pains, my purchase is but error; I may safely say, to err, hath cost me more, than it has many to find the truth; and truth itself shall give this testimony at last, that if I have missed of her, it is not my fault, but my misfortune.

Having begged your Grace's pardon, for this *περιαντιολογια*,* peradventure unseasonable, I will take the liberty to consider of the things themselves discussed in the pamphlet.

And *first*, howsoever I have miscast some parcels of my account, yet I am most certain that the total sum is right; for it amounts to no more than that precept of the Apostle—"As far as it is possible, have peace with all men." For this purpose, having summoned up sundry occasions of schism, and valuing them with the best judgment I could, I still ended with advice to all possible accommodation and communion, one only excepted. Now certainly there could be no great harm in the premises, where the conclusion was nothing else but peace.

One of the ancient grammarians, delivering the laws of a comedy somewhat scrupulously, thought *non posse ferrum nominari in comoedia, ne transeat in tragoediam*; that to name a sword in a comedy was enough to fright it into a tragedy. The very theme I handled, caused me to fall on words of dis-

* Egotism.

sension, and noise, and tumult, and stir; yet I hope it is but an unnecessary fear, that the last scene being peace, the discourse will prove any other than comical.

To touch upon every jarring string in it, were too much to abuse your Grace's patience, of which once already you have been so extraordinary liberal unto me. All that may seem to lie open to exception, I will comprise under two heads; within compass of which, all other petty and inferior matters will easily fall. The *first* concerns my carriage towards antiquity; the *second* towards authority; against both which, I may be supposed to trespass. For the *first*, I am thought to have been too sharp in censuring antiquity, beyond that good respect which is due unto it. In this point, my error, if any be, sprang from this; that taking actions to be the fruit by which men are to be judged, I judged of the persons by their actions, and not of actions by the persons from whom they proceeded; for to judge of actions by persons and times, I have always taken it to be most unnatural. Hence it is, that having no good conceit, for I will speak the truth, of our rule by which we celebrate the feast of Easter; *First*, because it is borrowed of Moses, without any warrant, for ought I know; *Secondly*, because it is of no use; for which way is the service of God or man any jot more advanced by making that feast wander betwixt day and day, than by fixing it on one known day? *Thirdly*, because it

is obscure and intricate, few scholars acquainting themselves therewith, and there being nothing more ridiculous than *difficiles nugae*, useless intricacies and obscurities, I could not with patience speak gently of those, who used so small and contemptible an occasion, to the great disturbance and rending of the churches; and in maintenance of a toy and simple ceremony, which it is no way beneficial to preserve, to fall into that error, than which, themselves every where tell us, there can scarcely any be more dangerous.

Whereas in one point, speaking of church authority, I bluntly added, "which is none;" I must acknowledge it was uncatiously spoken, and being taken in a generality, is false; though, as it refers to the occasion which there I fell upon, it is, as I think I may safely say, most true. For church authority, that is, authority residing in ecclesiastical persons, is either of jurisdiction in church causes and matter of fact, or of decision in point of church questions, and disputable opinion. As for the *first*, in church causes or matter of fact, ecclesiastical persons, in cases of their cognizance, have the same authority as any others have, to whom power of jurisdiction is committed. Their consistories, their courts, their determinations, stand upon as warrantable evidence as the decisions of other benches and courts do. I count, in point of decision of church questions, if I say of the authority of the church, that it was none, I know no adversary that I

have, the church of Rome only excepted; for this cannot be true, except we make the church judge of controversies; the contrary to which we generally maintain against that church. Now it plainly appears, that upon this occasion I spake it; for beginning to speak of schism arising by reason of ambiguous opinion, I brought in nakedly those words which gave occasion of offence; which if I had spoken with due qualification, I had not erred at all. Again, whereas I did too plainly deliver myself, *de origine domini*, and denied it to be founded either in nature or in religion; I am very well content to put off the decision of this point till Elias comes. In the mean time, whether it be true or false, let it pass for my mistake; for it is but a point of mere speculation, which we fall upon when we study Aristotle's Politics, and in common life and use hath no place at all. For authority is not wont to dispute, and it goes but lazily on, when it must defend itself by arguments in the schools. Whether dominion *in civilibus*, or *in sacris* be *κτείνεις*, &c. or comes in by divine right, it concerns them to look to, who have dominion committed to them. To others, whose duty it is to obey, and to myself above all, who am best contented to live and die a poor and private man, it is a speculation merely useless. Our Saviour questions not Herod's or Augustus's title, and confessed that Pilate had his power from above; which yet we know came but by delegation from Tiberius Caesar. Let titles of honour

and dominion go as the providence of God will have, yet quiet and peaceable men will not fail of their obedience; no more will I of ought, so be that God and good conscience command not the contrary. A higher degree of duty I do not see how any man can demand at my hands; for whereas the exception of a good conscience sounds not well with many men, because oftentimes, under that form, pertinacy and wilfulness is suspected to couch itself. In this case it concerns every man sincerely to know the truth of his own heart, and so accordingly to determine of his own way, whatsoever the judgment of his superiors be, or whatsoever event befall him. For since, in case of conscience, many times there is a necessity to fall either into the hands of men, or into the hands of God; of these two, whether is the best, I leave every particular man to judge; only I will add thus much, it is a fearful thing to trifle with conscience, for most assuredly, according unto it, a man shall stand or fall at the last.

One thorn more there is, which I would, if I might, pull out of the foot of him, who shall tread upon that paper; for by reason of a passage there, wherein I sharply taxed episcopal ambition, I have been suspected by some, into whose hands that schedule fell before ever it came to your Grace's view, that in my heart I did secretly lodge a malignity against the episcopal order; and that, under pretence of taxing the antients, I secretly lashed at the present times.

What obedience I owe unto episcopal jurisdiction, I have already plainly and sincerely opened unto your Grace ; and my trust is, you believe me ; so that in that regard I intend to say no more ; and the very consideration of the things themselves, which there I speak of, frees me from all suspicion of secret gliding at the present. For I spake of schisms arising either out of plurality of bishops in one diocess, or superiority of bishops in sundry diocesses ; both these are strangers to ours, and proper to the antient times ; the *first* arising from the unruliness of the people, in whose hands in those times the nomination of bishops was ; the *other* from somewhat, whether good or bad I know not, in the princes then living, who left the bishops to themselves, among whom some there were no better than other men, and took no keep of the antient canons of the church, by which the limits, orders, and pre-eminences of all diocesses and provinces were set. But our times have seen a prosperous change ; for the nomination of bishops, which was sometimes in the people, is now most happily devolved into the prince's hand, together with the care of the preservation of the bounds of bishops' sees, and antient titles of precedency. So that now, since that happy change, for well near one hundred years, we have had no experience of any such mis-orders, neither are we likely hereafter to fear any, so long as so good, so moderate, so gracious a royal hand shall hold the stern ; which God grant may be either in him, or his, till times be no more.

ON
PRIVATE JUDGMENT
IN
RELIGION.

FROM A SERMON ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

INFALLIBILITY hath been for a long time past the subject of great dispute and quarrel in the church; for since there was no other likelihood, but as amongst other men, so amongst Christians, doubts, debates, dissensions would arise, men always have thought it a thing very equitable, that by the providence of God, there should in some part of the church, or in some person, reside a power of clearing such doubts, and settling such scruples, as many times possess the minds of most Christians. Now to appoint such a judge, and not to give him infallibility in his decision, but to permit him to wander and mistake in his sentence, this, peradventure, were not to mend, but only to change and supplant one error by bringing in another. An infallibility, therefore, there must be; but men have marvellously wearied themselves in seeking to

find out where it is. Some have sought it in general councils, and have conceived, that if it be not there to be found, it is for certainty fled out of the world. Some have tied it to the church of Rome, and to the bishop of that see. Every man finds it, or thinks he finds it, accordingly as that faction, or part of the church upon which he is fallen, doth direct him. Thus, like the men of Sodom before Lot's door, men have wearied themselves, and have gone far and near to find out that which is hard at hand. We see many times a kind of ridiculous and jocular forgetfulness of many men, seeking for that which they have in their hands; so fares it here, with men who seek for infallibility in others, which either is, or ought to be, in themselves; as Saul sought his father's asses, whilst they were now at home; or as Oedipus, in the tragedy, sent to the oracle to inquire the cause of the plague in Thebes, whereas himself was the man.* For, Beloved, infallibility is not a favour impropriated to any one man, it is a duty alike expected at the hands of all; all must have it. St Paul, when he gives this precept, directs it not to councils, to bishops, to teachers and preachers, but to all of the Galatian churches, and in them to all of the churches in the world. Unto you therefore, and to every one, of what sex, of what rank or degree, and place soever, from him that studies in his library, to him that sweats

* Sophocl. Oedip-Tyran.

at the plough-tail, belongs this precept of St Paul, "Be not deceived."

Which command that you may the better conceive and drink in, let us see what it is that a man must do, who resolves to obey the Apostle, and not to be deceived; it is not much; I comprise it all in two words, *What*, and *Wherefore*. First, you must know *what* it is that is commanded you; Secondly, *wherefore*, that is, upon what authority, upon what reason. It is reported of Aristotle, that being sick, when his physician came to administer to him, he asked him a reason of his action, and told him, that he would be cured like a man, and not like a beast. Deceit and error are the diseases of the mind; he that strives to cure it upon bare command, brings you indeed a potion, or rather a drench, which, for ought you know, may as well set on and increase, as remove the error; but when he opens his authorities, when he makes you to conceive his grounds and reasons, then, and not before, he cures your error. They that come and tell you what you are to believe, what you are to do, and tell you not why, they are not physicians, but leaches; and if you so take things at their hands, you do not like men, but like beasts. I know this is something an hard doctrine for the many to hear, neither is it usually taught by the common teachers; one part you will be content to yield unto, namely, to take at our hands, what it is you are to believe or do; but the other part you stiffly refuse. To know the

grounds and reasons of what you do, or of what you believe, this you remit to us ; to require this at your hands were as improper, as if we should clap the saddle on the back of the ox. And for this you have your reasons too, as you think ; you are men whose time is taken up in your trades and callings, you are unlearned, unread, of weak and shallow understandings ; it is therefore for you not only modesty, but even necessity, to submit yourselves to better judgment ; and for inquiry into the reasons and causes of commands, this, as a little too speculative, you are content should lie upon your teachers ; they are men born under happier stars than ordinary, who attain to the discovery of reasons and causes of things.*

Beloved, all this I know, yet I must still go on, and require the performance of the Apostle's precept, "Be not deceived ;" which is a point of perfection which you shall never arrive at, except you forego these pretences. St Jerom tells us, that it was a precept of Pythagoras, "Where you find a man laden, there to increase his burden, and never go about to ease him, which would lay his burden down ;" which he interprets thus, "the meaning," saith he, "of that precept was, to men that go on in virtue and industry you must still give, and add new precepts, new commands, but idle persons must be forsaken."† Beloved, it

* *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.* Virg. Georg.

† *Oneratis superponendum onus, deponentibus non communicandum ; ad virtutem incedentibus augmentanda praecepta ; tradentes se otio, relinquendos.* Adv. Rufin. lib. iii.

falls me by lot this day to act Pythagoras his part ; the burden of this precept laid upon you by the blessed Apostle, I told you consisted of two parts, *what* and *why* ; that part of your burden which contains *what*, I see you will willingly take up ; but that other, which comprehends *why*, that is either too hot or too heavy, you dare not meddle with it ; but I must add that also to your burthen, or else I must leave you for idle persons ; for without the knowledge of *why*, of the true grounds or reasons of things, there is no possibility of not being deceived. Your teachers and instructors, whom you follow, they may be wise and learned, yet may they be deceived ; but suppose they be not deceived, yet if you know not so much, you are not yet excused. Something there is, which makes those men not to be deceived ; if you will be sure not to be deceived, then know you that as well as they. Is it divine authority that preserves them from being deceived ? You must know that as well as they. Is it strength of reason ? You must know it as well as they. For still in following your teachers, you may be deceived, for aught you know, till you know they are not deceived ; which you can never know, until you know the grounds and reasons upon which they stand ; for there is no other means not to be deceived, but to know things yourselves.

I will put on this doctrine further, and convince you by your own reason. It is a question made by John Gerson, sometime chancellor of Paris, “ Wherefore,

hath God given me the light of reason and conscience, if I must suffer myself to be led and governed by the reason and conscience of another man?"* Will any of you befriend me so far as to assoil this question? For I must confess I cannot. It was the speech of a good husbandman, "It is but a folly to possess a piece of ground except you till it."† And how then can it stand with reason, that a man should be possessor of so goodly a piece of the Lord's pasture, as is this light of understanding and reason, which he hath endued us with in the day of our creation, if he suffer it to lie untilld, or sow not in it the Lord's seed? Needs must our reason, if it be suffered thus to lie fallow, like the vineyard of the sluggard in the Proverbs, quickly become wild, and be overrun with briers and thorns. Think we that the neglect of these our faculties shall escape unpunished with God? St Basil tells us, "That the man that is utterly devoid of all education, and hath nothing but his reason to be guided by, yet even such an one, if he doth offend, shall not escape unpunished, because he hath not used those common notions ingrafted by God in his heart, to that end for which they were given." How much ever then shall that man's punishment be, who in this great means of education, amidst so many, so plain, so easy,

* Quorsum mihi mea conscientia, si mihi secundum alienam conscientiam vivendum est et moriendum.

† Non satis est agrum possidere velle, si colere non possit.

ways of cultivation of our reasonable faculties, yet neglects all, and lets them lie fallow, and is content another should have his wits in keeping ?

It were a thing worth looking into, to know the reason why men are so generally willing, in point of religion, to cast themselves into other men's arms, and leaving their own reason, rely so much on another man's. Is it because it is modesty and humility to think another man's reason better than our own ? Indeed I know not how it comes to pass, we account it a vice, a part of envy, to think another man's goods, or another man's fortunes, to be better than our own ;* and yet we account it a singular virtue to esteem our reason and wit meaner than other men's. Let us not mistake ourselves ; to contemn the advice and help of others, in love and admiration to our own conceits, to depress and disgrace other men's, this is the foul vice of pride ; on the contrary, thankfully to entertain the advice of others, to give it its due, and ingenuously to prefer it before our own, if it deserve it, this is that gracious virtue of modesty ; but altogether to mistrust and relinquish our own faculties, and commend ourselves to others, this is nothing but poverty of spirit and indiscretion.

Hath God given you eyes to see, and legs to support you, that so yourselves might lie still, or sleep,

* *Fertilior seges est alienis semper in arvis,
Vicinumque pecus grandius uber habet.*

Ovid. de Art. Am. lib. i.

and require the use of other men's eyes and legs? *That* faculty of reason, which is in every one of you, even in the meanest that hears me this day, next to the help of God, is your eyes to direct you, and your legs to support you in your course of integrity and sanctity ; you may no more refuse or neglect the use of it, and rest yourselves upon the use of other men's reason, than neglect your own, and call for the use of other men's eyes and legs. The man in the Gospel, who had bought a farm, excuses himself from going to the marriage supper, because himself would go and see it ; but we have taken an easier course ; we can buy our farm, and go to supper too, and *that* only by saving our pains to see it ; we profess ourselves to have made a great purchase of heavenly doctrine, yet we refuse to see it, and survey it ourselves, but trust other men's eyes and our surveyors ; and wot you to what end ? I know not except it be, that so we may with the better leisure go to the marriage supper ; that, with Haman, we may the more merrily go in to the banquet provided for us ; that so we may the more freely betake ourselves to our pleasures, to our profits, to our trades, to our preferences, and ambition. Never was there any business of weight so usually discharged by proxy and deputy, as this sacred business hath been from time to time. Sleiden the historian observes, that it was grown a custom in his time, for great persons to provide them chanteries and chaplains, to celebrate their

obits, and to offer for their soul's health, even in their life times, whilst they themselves intended other matters ; and thus they discharge the cure of their own souls by deputy. Not only in Germany, where Sleiden lived, but even in England, amongst us, that custom had taken footing, and was sometime practised even in this place, by one sometimes of this body.* Margaret of Valois, not long since Queen of France, built her chapel, provided her chaplains, and large endowment for them, that so perpetually day and night every hour successively, without intermission, by some one or other, there might intercession be made to God for her unto the world's end ; a thing which herself had little care or thought of in her life time, as having other business to think on. So confident are we of the eternal good of our souls, upon the knowledge, devotion, and industry of others, and so loth to take any pains ourselves in that behalf, and *that* in a business, which doth so nearly concern us.

Would you see how ridiculously we abuse ourselves, when we thus neglect our own knowledge, and securely hazard ourselves upon others' skill? Give me leave then to shew you a perfect pattern of it, and to report to you what I find in Seneca the philosopher recorded of a gentleman in Rome, who being purely ignorant, yet greatly desirous to seem learned, procured himself many servants, of which some he

*R. Lupton.

caused to study the poets, some the orators, some the historians, some the philosophers, and in a strange kind of fancy, all their learning he verily thought to be his own, and persuaded himself that he knew all that his servants understood; yea, he grew to that height of madness in this kind, that being weak in body, and diseased in his feet, he provided himself of wrestlers and runners, and proclaimed games and races, and performed them by his servants; still applauding himself, as if himself had done them.* Beloved, you are this man; when you neglect to try the spirits, to study the means of salvation yourselves, but content yourselves to take them upon trust, and repose yourselves altogether on the wit and knowledge of us that are your teachers, what is this in a manner but to account with yourselves, that our knowledge is yours, that you know all that we know, who are but your servants in Jesus Christ? We have a common saying, "Many scholars prove far better than their masters." Would you bear a part in this saying, and prove better than we that are your teachers? Then make our knowledge yours, not as the Roman gentleman did, by imputation, or by believing well of it, but by thoroughly perceiving and understanding it, and discovering the uttermost grounds on which it subsists. There is no way but this, and this David found by his own experience; "I am wiser than my

* Senecae Epist. ad Lucil. xxvii.

teachers," saith he, in his cxix. Psalm, ver. 99. Why? because he believed them? This could never have made him so wise, much less wiser; why then? "for thy testimonies," saith he, "are my studies." Therefore is he wiser than his teachers, because that knowing all that they could teach him, he staid not there, but by his own search and study he arrives at a degree of knowledge beyond his masters. St Basil, in his sermons upon some of the Psalms, taxes a sort of men, who thought it a sin to know more of God than the tradition of their fathers would give them leave; and would not advance and improve the knowledge of the truth by any faculty or industry of their own. Beloved, there is not a more immediate way to fall into this reproof of St Basil, and to hinder all advancement and growth of Christian knowledge amongst the common sort of men, than this easy and slothful resolution, to restt themselves on others' wits.

St Jerom, in the preface to his comments on the Epistle to the Galatians, much commends Marcella, a gentlewoman of Rome, for this, that in her pursuit of Christian knowledge, "she would receive nothing from him, after the manner of the disciples of Pythagoras, upon trust, and upon his bare word and authority, but would so thoroughly sift and try all things of herself, that she seemed," saith he, "not so much to be my scholar and hearer, as my judge."*

* Neque verò more Pythagorico quicquid responderam rectum putabat, nec sineratione praejudicata apud eam valebat auctoritas;

Beloved, what hindrers, but we should all, all of all sexes, ages, callings, be like to this Roman matron, and be not only hearers, but judges too? Neither to adore all things for Gospel which our betters tell us, but to bring all things to the true test; to know the reasons, try the authorities, and never rest ourselves, till we take up that conclusion of the Psalmist, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God." Ps. xlviii. 8.

Now to remove you yet a little further from this fancy of casting yourself into the arms of others, and to conciliate you the more to God and your reason, I will open one thing farther unto you, which is this, That you put off the care of your faith and religion from yourselves on other men sundry ways, when you think you do nothing less; for when we plead for the truth of our profession, and appeal either to our education or breeding, "thus we have been brought up, thus we have been taught;" or to antiquity, "thus have our ancients delivered unto us;" or to universality, "this hath been the doctrine generally received;" or to synods, councils, and consent of churches, "this is the doctrine established by ecclesiastical authority;" all these are nothing else but deceitful forms of shifting the account and reason of our faith and religion from ourselves, and casting it upon the back of others. I will shew it

sed examinabat omnia, et sagaci mente universa pensabat, ut mentiretur non tam discipulam habere, quam judicem.

you by the particular examination of every one of these ; which I will the willinger do, because I see these are the common hackney reasons, which most men use in flattering themselves in their mistakes ; for all this is nothing else but man's authority thrust upon us under divers shapes.

For, *first* of all, education and breeding is nothing else but the authority of our teachers taken over our childhood. Now there is nothing which ought to be of less force with us, or which we ought more to suspect ; for childhood hath one thing natural to it, which is a great enemy to truth, and a great furtherer of deceit ; what is that ? Credulity. Nothing is more credulous than a child ; and our daily experience shews how strangely they will believe either their ancients, or one another, in most incredible reports. For, to be able to judge what persons, what reports are credible, is a point of strength, of which that age is not capable. "The chiefest sinew and strength of wisdom," saith Epicharmus, "is, not easily to believe." Have we not then great cause to call to better account, and examine by better reason, whatsoever we learnt in so credulous and easy an age, so apt, like the softest wax, to receive every impression ? Yet notwithstanding this singular weakness, and this large and real exception which we have against education, I verily persuade myself, that if the best and strongest ground of most men's religion were opened, it would appear to be nothing else.

Secondly, Antiquity, what is it else, God only excepted, but man's authority born some ages before us? Now for the truth of things, time makes no alteration; things are still the same they are, let the time be past, present, or to come. Those things which we reverence for antiquity, what were they at their first birth? Were they false? Time cannot make them true; were they true? Time cannot make them more true. The circumstance therefore of time, in respect of truth and error, is merely impertinent. Yet thus much must I say for antiquity, that amongst all these balancing and halting proofs, if truth have any advantage against error and deceit, it is here. For there is an antiquity which is proper to truth, and in which error can claim no part; but then it must be an antiquity most ancient. This cannot be but true, for it is God, and God is truth. All other parts of antiquity, deceit and falsehood will lay claim to as well as truth. Most certain it is, truth is more ancient than error; for error is nothing else but deviation and swerving from the truth. Were not truth therefore first, there could be no error, since there could be no swerving from that which is not. When, therefore, antiquity is pleaded for the proof of any conclusion commended to you for true, be you careful to know whether it be most ancient, yea or no; if it be so, then is it an invincible proof, and pleads for nothing but the truth; if otherwise, though it be as ancient, I say not as Inachus, but as Satan himself, yet it is no proof of truth.

Thirdly, Universality is such a proof of truth, as truth itself is ashamed of ; for universality is nothing but a quainter and a trimmer name to signify the multitude. Now human authority at the strongest is but weak, but the multitude is the weakest part of human authority ; it is the great patron of error, most easily abused, and most hardly disabused. The beginning of error may be, and mostly is, from private persons, but the maintainer and continuer of error is the multitude. Private persons first beget errors in the multitude, and make them public ; and publicness of them begets them again in private persons.* It is a thing which our common experience and practice acquaints us with, that when some private persons have gained authority with the multitude, and infused some error into them, and made it public, the publicness of the error gains authority to it, and interchangeably prevails with private persons to entertain it. The most singular and strongest part of human authority is properly in the wisest and most virtuous ; and these I trow, are not the most universal. If truth and goodness go by universality and multitude, what mean then the prophets and holy men of God every where in Scripture so frequently, so bitterly, to complain of the small number of good men, careful of God and truth ? Neither is the complaint proper to Scripture ; it is the common complaint of all that have left

* Ubi singulorum error fecerit publicum, singulorum errorem facit publicus.

any records of antiquity behind them. Could wishing do any good, I could wish well to this kind of proof; but it will never go so well with mankind that the most shall be the best.* The best that I can say of argument and reason, drawn from universality and multitude, is this, such reason may, perchance, well serve to excuse an error, but it can never serve to warrant a truth.

Fourthly, Councils, and Synods, and consent of churches, these indeed may seem of some force; they are taken to be the strongest weapons, which the church had fought with; yet this is still human authority after another fashion. Let me add one thing, that the truth hath not been more relieved by these, than it hath been distressed. At the council at Nice met 318 bishops to defend the divinity of the Son of God; but at Arminum met well near 600 bishops to deny it. I ask then, what gained the truth here by a synod? Certainly in the eye of reason it more endangered it; for it discovered the advantage that error had among the multitude above truth; by which reason, truth might have been greatly hazarded. I have read that the nobility of Rome, upon some fancy or other, thought fit, that all servants should wear a kind of garment proper to them, so that it might be known who were servants, who were freemen; but they were quickly weary of this conceit; for perceiv-

* Sed nunquam ita bene erit rebus humanis, ut plures sint meliore

ing in what multitudes servants were in most places, they feared that the singularity of their garment might be an item to them to take notice of their multitude, and to know their own strength, and so at length take advantage of it against their masters. This device of calling councils, was but like that fancy of the Roman gentlemen ; for many times it might well have proved a great means to have endangered the truth, by making the enemies thereof to see their own strength and work upon that advantage ; for it is a speedy way to make them to see that, which for the most part is very true, that there are more which run against the truth, than with it.

THE
MORAL CHRISTIAN.

FROM A SERMON ON DEALING WITH ERRING
CHRISTIANS.

Two parts there are that do completely make up a Christian man, a true faith, and an honest conversation. The first, though it seem the worthier, and therefore gives unto us the name of Christians, yet the second, in the end, will prove the surer. For true profession, without honest conversation, not only saves not, but increases our weight of punishment; but a good life, without true profession, though it brings us not to heaven, yet it lessens the measure of our judgment; so that a moral man, so called, is a Christian by the surer side. As our Saviour saith of one in the Gospel, that had wisely and discreetly answered him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of Heaven;" Matth. xii. 34; so may we say of these men, suppose that as yet they be not of, yet certainly far from the kingdom of Heaven they cannot be.

Yea, this sincerity of life, though severed from true profession, did seem such a jewel in the eyes of some of the ancient fathers, that their opinion was, and so have they in their writings (erroneously doubtless) testified it, that God hath in store for such men, not only this mitigating mercy, of which but now I spake, but even saving grace, so far forth as to make them possessors of his kingdom. Let it not trouble you, that I entitle them to some part of our Christian faith, and therefore without scruple to be received as weak, and not to be cast forth as dead. Salvianus disputing what faith is, "What might this faith be?" saith he, "I suppose it is nothing else, but faithfully to believe Christ, and this is to be faithful unto God, which is nothing else but faithfully to keep the Commandments of God."* Not therefore, only a bare belief, but the fidelity and trustiness of God's servants, faithfully accomplishing the will of our Master, is required as a part of our Christian faith.

Now all those good things, which moral men by the light of nature do, are a part of God's will written in their hearts; wherefore, so far as they were conscientious in performing them, if Salvianus his reason be good, so far have they title and interest in our faith. And therefore Regulus, that famous Roman, when he endured infinite torments, rather than

* *Quid est igitur credulitas vel fides? opinor fideliter hominem Christo credere, id est, fidelem Deo esse, hoc est fideliter Dei mandata servare.*

he would break his oath, may thus far be counted a martyr, and witness for the truth. For the crown of martyrdom sits not only on the heads of those who have lost their lives, rather than they would cease to profess the name of Christ, but on the head of every one that suffers for the testimony of a good conscience and for righteousness' sake. And here I cannot pass by one very general gross mistaking of our age. For in our discourses concerning the notes of a Christian man, by what signs we may know a man to be one of the visible company of Christ, we have so tied ourselves to this outward profession, that if we know no other virtue in a man, but that he hath conned his creed by heart, let his life be never so profane, we think it argument enough for us to account him within the pale and circuit of the church; on the contrary side, let his life be never so upright, if either he be little seen in, or peradventure quite ignorant of the mystery of Christ, we esteem him but as dead; and those who conceive well of those moral good things, as of some tokens giving hope of life, we account but as a kind of Manichees, who thought the very earth had life in it.

I must confess that I have not yet made that proficiency in the schools of our age, as that I could see why the second table, and the acts of it, are not as properly the parts of Religion and Christianity, as the acts and observations of the first. If I mistake, then it is St James that hath abused me; for he, describ-

ing Religion by its proper acts, tells us, that "True Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Jam. i. 27. So that the thing, which in an especial refined dialect of the new Christian language, signifies nothing but morality and civility, *that* in the language of the Holy Ghost imports true religion. Wherefore, any difference that the Holy Ghost makes notwithstanding, the man of virtuous dispositions, though ignorant of the mystery of Christ, be it Fabricius, or Regulus, or any ancient heathen man, famous for sincerity and uprightness of carriage, hath as sure a claim and interest in the church of Christ, as the man deepest skilled in, most certainly believing, and openly professing all that is written in the Holy Books of God, if he endeavour not to "show his faith by his works," Jam. ii. 18. The ancients, therefore, where they found this kind of men, gladly received them, and conversed familiarly with them, as appears by the friendly intercourse of epistles of St Basil with Libanius, of Nazianzen and Austin with sundry others.

ORIGINAL SIN.

FROM A SERMON ON CHRISTIAN OMNIPOTENCY.

I CONFESS, it is a strange thing, and it hath many times much amazed me, to see how ripe to sin many children are, in their young and tender years ; and, ere they understand what the name of sin and evil means, they are unexpectedly, and no man knows by what means, wonderfully prompt and witty to villany and wickedness. I know not to what cause to impute this thing, but I verily suppose I might quit original sin from the guilt of it ; for it is a ruled case, and concluded by the general consent of the schools, that *original sin* is alike in all ; and St Paul seems to me to speak to that purpose, when he saith, that “ God hath alike concluded all under sin,” Galat. iii. 22 ; and that “ all are alike deprived of the glory of God.” Rom. iii. 23. Were therefore original sin the cause of this strange exorbitancy in some young children, they should all be so ; a thing which our own experience teaches us to be false ; for we see many times, even in young children, many good and gracious things,

which being followed with good education, must needs come to excellent effect. "In children," saith Quintilian, "many times a hope of excellent things appears, which in riper age, for want of cherishing, fades and withers away; a certain sign that nature is not so weak, as parents and tutors are negligent."* Whence then comes this difference? Certainly not from our nature, which is one in all, but from some other cause. As for original sin, of what strength it is, I will not discuss; only thus much I will say, there is none of us all, but is much more wicked, than the strength of any primitive corruption can constrain.

Again, let us take heed that we abuse not ourselves, that we use not the names of original weakness as a stale and stalking horse, as a pretence to choke and cover somewhat else; for oftentimes, when evil education, wicked examples, long custom, and continuance in sin hath bred in us a habit and necessity of sinning, presently original sin, and the weakness of man's nature, bear the blame. "When through sloth and idleness, luxury and distemper, our time is lost, our bodies decayed, our wits dulled, we cast all the fault on the weakness of our nature."† That "law of sin in our members," of which St Paul spake, Rom. vii. 23, and which some take to be original corrup-

* In pueris elucet spes plurimorum, quae cum emoritur aetate, manifestum est, non naturam defecisse sed curam. Inst. Orat. lib. i. c. 1.

† Ubi per seccordiam, vires, tempus, ingenium, defluxere, naturae infirmitas accusatur. Sallust. Bell. Jugurth. c. 1.

tion, St Austin once pronounced of it, (whether he meant to stand to it I know not, but so he once pronounced of it,) "That the law of sin, that carries us against our wills to sin, is nothing else but the force and violence of long custom and continuance in sin."* I know that, by the error of our first parents, the devil hath blinded and bound us more than ever the Philistines did Samson; yet this needs not to make us thus stand in fear of original weakness; for blind and bound as we are, let the devil build never so strong, yet if our hair be grown, if Christ do strengthen us, we shall be able, Samson like, to bear his strongest pillars, and pull down his house about his ears.

* *Lex peccati est violentia consuetudinis. Confes. lib. iii. c. 5.*

REMARKS
ON THE SIN AGAINST
THE HOLY GHOST.

FROM A TRACT ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

MANY have written of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and in defining or describing of it, follow their own zealous conceits, and not the canon of Holy Scriptures. The more dreadful the sin is, the more fearful we must be, in charging it upon any special crime or particular person. In defining a sin of so heinous a nature, direct and evident proof from Scripture is requisite. It is not enough to consider, as many do, what sins are most desperate and deadly, and therefore to conclude such sins are against the Holy Ghost. Thus indeed the Schoolmen have done, who have made six differences of this sin,* without

* The six differences the Schoolmen make of the sin against the Holy Ghost, are these ;

1. Envy of our brother's graces. 2. Impugning of the known truth. 3. Desperation. 4. Obstinacy. 5. Presumption. 6. Final impenitency.

ground or warrant from Scripture for so doing. And Bellarmine is so liberal in bestowing on such as he calls heretics, that his opinion is, that a man can scarce be a learned Protestant, without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. Neither are the Papists the only men that are mistaken about this sin ; but too many divines of the reformed churches have started aside from the Scripture, and have given us such intricate and contradictory definitions of this sin, as tend only to the perplexing the tender consciences of weak Christians. To make good this censure, I will briefly set down so much touching this sin, as I conceive is warranted by the word of God, and humbly submit to the judgment of the learned.

The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was an evil speaking of, or slandering of the miracles which our Saviour did, by those, who though they were convinced by the miracles to believe that such works could not be done but by the power of God, yet they did maliciously say, they were wrought by the power of the devil.

In this definition these points are observable.

1. I forbear to call it the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the blasphemy ; for though every blasphemy be a sin in general, yet our Saviour Christ terms it *the blasphemy*. And the Evangelists do all agree to give it the same term ; and it is now here in Holy Scripture called the sin against the Holy Ghost, and yet it appears both in St Matthew and St Mark,

that there was just occasion offered to our Saviour to call it so; where he compares it with the sin against the Son of Man, but he forbears to call it any thing but “the blasphemy”; thereby, no doubt, to teach us it consisteth only in cursed speaking and blaspheming. A serious consideration of this point may teach us so much moderation, as to confine ourselves to that term which our Saviour in the three Evangelists hath prescribed unto us. I cannot find that any man, that hath written upon this argument, hath made any observation, or noted this phrase and term used by the Evangelists, in pronouncing the dreadful sentence of our Saviour against the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost; I will cite these texts, where it is named; Matt. xii, 31; Mark iii. 29; Luke xii. 10.

2. A second observation is, that blasphemy is a speaking against another, as both St Matthew and St Luke expound the word; for in the original, it is a blasting the fame, or *blaming* of another; for from the Greek word *Βλασφημew*, both the French nation and our English by contraction have made the word “blame.”

3. To pass from the name to the thing itself, we may observe by the coherence of the texts, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was spoken of by our Saviour, concerning the Scribes and Pharisees. It was, saith St Mark, because the Pharisees said, he had an unclean spirit, and that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, &c. This speech of the Pharisees, where-

by they slandered his miracles wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, *is properly the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. How transcendant a crime it was, to traduce that power by which our Saviour wrought his miracles, may appear from the end for which these miracles were wrought ; which was, to prove to the people which saw them, that he was the Messiah ; which is evident from the places of Scripture, wherein he appealed to his works ; John x. 37, 38 ; John xiv. 11 ; Matt. xi. 4 ; John v. 36. These and other places show, that the working of miracles was an act of the most glorious manifestation of the power of God ; by which at the first view, the simplest people were led by their outward sense, to the great mystery of inward faith in Christ their Redeemer.

Therefore, for those men that were eye witnesses of those miracles, which did make them know that Christ was a teacher come from God, to blaspheme that power by which these miracles were wrought, and to say they were done by the help of the devil, was the most spiteful and malicious slander that could be invented ; for thereby they attempted, as much as in them lay, to destroy the very principles of faith, and to prevent the very first propagation of the Gospel, to the universal mischief of all mankind. And though these Pharisees were no Christians, and therefore could not fall away from faith, which they never had, yet they did know and believe that Christ was a teacher come from God ; for so our Saviour

tells them, John vii. 28, "Ye both know me, and whence I am." They did not believe him as a Saviour, but as a great Prophet from God; (as the Mahometans do at this very day,) they trusted to be saved by their law; and because he taught such things as did abrogate their law, in which they so much gloried, they were so malicious to his doctrine, which they did not believe, that they spoke evil of his miracles, which they did believe; lest the people, by approving his miracles, should believe his doctrine.

4. Observe that it is said to be blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; because, by the Holy Ghost the miracles were wrought, Matt. xii. 28; 1 Cor. xii. 10.

5. The blasphemy against the Son of Man was, when men considered Christ as a mere man, and did disgracefully tax his conversation, by saying, "Behold a glutton, a wine bibber, a friend to publicans and sinners." Matt. xi. 19. But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was, when men beholding Christ's miracles did enviously ascribe them to the devil, which they knew and believed to be done by God's power.

6. The texts formerly cited out of the three Evangelists, being all the places where the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is named, we cannot find by them, that we have any safe rule to conclude, that any but the Scribes and Pharisees, and their confederates, committed that sin. I dare not say, that Judas, Julian the Apostate, or Simon Magus, or those who stoned Stephen, were guilty thereof.

7. The Apostles have not in any of their Epistles once mentioned this blasphemy, and yet they were most careful and frequent in exhortations from all sorts of sin; it were much, therefore, if they should omit or forget such a fearful crime without often and precise admonishing to beware of it. And though negative proofs from Scripture are not demonstrative, yet the general silence of the Apostles may at least help to infer a probability, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not committable by any Christian, which lived not in time of our Saviour.

It remains to examine those common definitions of this sin, which are now current, though different in the terms by which they define it. Some call it a total or final falling away from faith, or a wilful apostacy, or a malicious resisting of the truth; yet when they come to explain their meaning, the difference among them is not considerable. I shall chiefly apply myself to Mr Calvin's definition, because his judgment hath gained the greatest reputation amongst the multitude; as also, that he himself promises such a true definition, as shall easily, by itself, overthrow all the rest. In his *Institut. lib. iii. chap. 3*, he saith; They sin against the Holy Ghost, *qui divinae veritati, (cujus fulgore sic perstringuntur, ut ignorantiam causari nequeant,) tamen destinata malitia resistunt, in hoc tantum, ut resistant.* Arminius also useth Mr Calvin's words. The rhetorical parenthesis, which might well have been spared in a definition, being

reduced to plain and brief terms; this definition of Calvin may be thus Englished; "They sin against the Holy Ghost, who of determined malice resist the known truth of God, to the end only to resist." In this Mr Calvin doth not define what the sin is, but who they are that commit it; whereas by the rules of logic *concretes* admit of no definition, but only *abstracts*. But taking the definition as it is, it consists principally of these three terms. *First*, Truth; *Secondly*, Known; *Thirdly*, Resisted; or a resisting the known truth. The words being general and doubtful, we will consider them singly.

FIRST, If by the truth, Mr Calvin understands the word of God, or the whole doctrine revealed in the Scriptures, then the sense of this term will be too large; for even the Pharisees, which spoke against the Holy Ghost, did not resist the whole truth of God in the Scripture, for they believed in the law of Moses, and had confidence to be saved by the keeping of it; and in defence of that law, as they thought, they did blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Therefore properly, by "the truth of God," Mr Calvin must confine his meaning to the truth of the Gospel or doctrine of faith; for so both he himself and others expound themselves, by terming the sin against the Holy Ghost a falling away, or turning away from from faith, or apostacy.

SECONDLY, By this word "known." Mr Calvin must mean belief; for faith is properly by believing, not knowing the truth

THIRDLY, The word "resisting" must mean unbelieving ; for if receiving of the truth be by belief, then resisting of the truth must be by unbelief. And indeed Mr Calvin explains himself in the same chapter, saying, "There is no place for pardon where knowledge is joined with unbelief ;" *Non esse veniæ locum ubi scientia ad incredulitatem accessit.* So then by this definition, *to resist the known truth*, is all one, as if Mr Calvin had said in proper terms, for a man at once to unbelieve that which he doth believe ; which two things it is impossible to do together ; and if they be not together, there can be no resistance. It is true, that for some reasons a man may be brought not to believe that which he formerly believed ; this cannot be in an instant, but successively unbelief comes in the place of belief. And this may not be called a resisting, for that all resistance consists in a violence between two at the least ; but where two succeed one another, and are never together, it cannot possibly be. I confess a man may resist the truth when it is a truth in itself only, or in the understanding of some other ; but to resist the truth which is known, and believed by the resister himself, is a direct contradiction ; for the nature of truth is such, that if the understanding apprehend it for truth, it cannot but assent to it. No man can force himself to believe what he lists, or when he lists. Sometimes a man knows not what to believe, but finds a suspension of his faith, or trepidation of his understanding,

not knowing which way to turn. This cannot be called a resisting of the truth, when the truth is not known, but doubted.

Again, some truths there be, though they be assented to by the understanding for truths, yet they are not desired as good ; for truth is one degree nearer the soul of man than goodness. The Pharisees did apprehend the miracles of our Saviour as true, but not as good ; because they tended to the derogation of their law, which they esteemed a better truth. And for this cause they blasphemed that truth, which in their hearts they believed for truth ; for the truth of words, or speech, is, as the schools say, nothing else but the sign of truth, not truth itself ; for truth itself is seated in the understanding, and not in the speech. That truth which the understanding assents to, the speech may affirm to be false ; there are many things believed in deed, which are denied in word ; but such a denial is not resisting but only making shew of resisting the truth ; for resistance must be in the same place where truth is ; truth being seated in the understanding, resistance must be placed there also ; the understanding can resist no truth, but by unbelieving of it. If Mr Calvin had intended of the truth only in word, he had come one step nearer to the truth of Scripture, but he was not so happy in the expression of his meaning ; nay, his terms of incredulity, apostacy, falling away, &c. relate to a real, not verbal apostacy, and unbelief. It remains then to

my understanding, that Mr Calvin makes the resistance of the truth to be a not believing of what we do believe ; which being a contradiction, he defines the sin against the Holy Ghost to be such a sin, as no man possibly can commit. And yet in the other extreme, in expounding his own definition, he makes it such a sin, as no man living but commits ; for by his doctrine, as I take it, any sin may be the sin against the Holy Ghost. His words are these, *Quorum convicta est conscientia verbum Dei esse quod repudiant et impugnant, impugnare tamen non desistant, illi in spiritum blasphemari dicuntur.* What man is there that doth not daily, in some point or other, forsake the word of God, and ceases not to impugn it, and is convinced thereof in his conscience ? I know Mr Calvin was far from thinking, that St Paul did sin against the Holy Ghost ; and yet St Paul, it seems, was convinced in his conscience, that it was the word of God he fought against, and yet ceased not to fight against it, when he saith, He delighted in the law of God, yet another law warring against the law of his mind, brought him into captivity to the law of sin. Rom. vii. 22, 23. What dangerous consequences weak consciences may draw to themselves, out of this unbridled, unlimited proposition of Mr Calvin's, let others judge.

There is a just cause, I presume, to except against Mr Calvin and all others, who in this concur with him, to omit the term of "blasphemy" in their defi-

nitions; for this is perpetually observed by our Saviour in his speech concerning this sin, by the Evangelists with one consent. But instead of the word "blasphemy," he hath brought in the word "resist," for a genus of this sin; but by what authority I know not. I cannot find it, or the equivalent to it, in any of those places, which are thought to touch this sin. I find only "falling away" mentioned, Heb. vi. 6, which phrase is used by Mr Calvin for "resisting;" whereas, "falling away," and "resisting," are no more alike than fighting and running away, which are little less than contraries. The last point I shall touch in Mr Calvin's definition, is, where he saith, the sinners against the Holy Ghost resist, to the end only that they may resist; and yet withal he tells, they resist out of a determined malice; if they resist out of malice, then the end for which they resist, is for the satisfaction of their malice. The Pharisees here condemned by our Saviour, had another end than bare resisting. The defence of the law of Moses was the end for which they blasphemed, and not any pleasure they could have in the bare and simple act of resistance.

We find three old opinions concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost, but they were long since exploded; I will but only name them. Origen thought all sins committed after baptism were sins against the Holy Ghost. His reason was only a witless conceit of his own, that God the Father was in all things, the

Son only in all reasonable creatures, the Holy Ghost in all regenerate men; therefore, when men sin against the Divine Person, which is in them, if they be Heathen, they sin against God the Father, or Son; if they be Christians, they sin against God the Holy Ghost; but this opinion is false. The Novatian heretics agreed with Origen in opinion, for they denied remission of sins to any that fell; thinking all falls of Christians to be sins against the Holy Ghost; but this is false, else all sins were unpardonable to Christians. Yet we find St Paul to remit the sins of the incestuous Corinthian. Our Saviour also chargeth the Pharisees with this, who were no Christians. St Austin thought final impenitency to be the sin against the Holy Ghost; but final impenitency is no blasphemy, but only a general circumstance, that may accompany any sin; besides, our Saviour intends, that this sin may be found in this life; and the Pharisees were alive, when they were accused of it. Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, thought sins of malice to be sins against the Holy Ghost, and sins of infirmity against the Father, and sins of ignorance against the Son. This opinion is false, because the sin against the Holy Ghost must be a sin of some certain blasphemy, but malice is no certain sin, but a general, and it is not always a blasphemy.

In this determination of the point of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and the enquiry made into Mr Calvin's and other's new definition, I hope I have delivered nothing contrary to the articles of the church of England.

ON
PARABLES.

FROM A SERMON ON THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

COMMON experience shows we are all very desirous to hear narrations and reports, either pleasant or strange ; wise men therefore, and God himself, which is wiser than men, being to train up mankind, a subject dull of hearing, and hardly drawn to learn, have from time to time wrought upon this humour, upon this part of our disposition, and mitigated, sugared, as it were, the unpleasantness of a difficult and hard lesson, with the sweetness of some delightful parable or fable. St Chrysostom tells us of a physician, who finding his patient to abhor physic, but infinitely long for wine, heating an earthen cup in the fire, and quenching it in wine, put his potion therein, that so the sick person being deceived with the smell of wine might unawares drink of the physic ; or, that I may better draw my comparison from Scripture, as when Jacob meant to be welcome to his father Isaac, he put on his brother Esau's apparel, and so got access.

So, Beloved, wise men, when they meant either to instruct the ignorant, or to reprove offenders, to procure their welcome, and make their way more passable, have been wont for the most part, as it were, to clothe their lesson or reproof in a parable, or to serve it in a dish savouring of wine, that so Jacob might be admitted under Esau's coat, that the smell of the pleasantness of wine might draw down the wholesomeness of physic. Great and singular have been those effects, which this kind of teaching by parables hath wrought in men; by informing their ignorance, reproving their error, working patience of reproof, opening the understanding, moving the affections, and other sovereign commodities. And for this cause not only our poets and profane authors, but whole cities, and men which gave laws to commonwealths, have made especial choice of this course; yea, our Saviour Christ himself hath filled the Gospels with parables, made them like a divine and Christian Esop's Fables, because he found it to be exceeding profitable.

For, *first* of all, it is the plainest and most familiar way, and, above all other, stoops to the capacity of the learner, as being drawn either from trees, or beasts, or from some ordinary, common, and known actions of men; as from a shepherd attending his flock, from an husbandman sowing corn in his field, from a fisher casting his net into the sea, from a woman putting leaven into her dough, or the like. So that in this respect a parable is like Moses' tabernacle,

which outwardly was nothing but goat skins, or some ordinary stuff, but within it was silk, and purple, and gold. And, indeed, since those we teach are either children or ignorant persons who are but children, for every man in what he is ignorant is no better than a child, that manner of information fits best, which is most easy and familiar. Again, a parable is a kind of pattern and example, expressing unto us what we hear; now nothing doth more illustrate and explain than instance and example; in a parable, as it were upon a stage, the thing that we are taught is in a manner acted, and set forth before our eyes.

Secondly, Parables do not only by their plainness open the understanding, but they work upon the affections, and breed delight of hearing, by reason of that faceteness and wittiness, which are many times found in them, by reason of which they insinuate themselves, and creep into us, and, ere we are aware, work that end for which they were delivered. Who is not much moved with that parable of Jotham in the book of Judges, ix. 8, that “the trees went forth to choose a king;” or that of Menenius Agrippa in Livy, that the parts of the body conspired against the belly; by which the one showed the wickedness of the men of Shechem against the sons of Gideon; the other the folly of the common people, in conspiring against the senators and noblemen? And no marvel, Beloved, if this faceteness of parables doth thus work with men, since it seems to have had wonderful force

with God himself ; for when the Canaanitish woman, in the Gospel, had long importuned our Saviour in the behalf of her daughter, and our Saviour had answered her with that short, cutting, and reproachful parable, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs ;" Matt. xv. 26, she facetely and wittily retorts and turns upon our Saviour his own parable ; "Truth Lord," saith she, "yet dogs do eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table ;" be it that I am but a dog, I require no more than is due to a dog, even the crumbs that fall from your table ; with which speech our Saviour was so far taken, as that he seems to have been stricken into a wonderment ; for he presently cries out, "O woman, great is thy faith."

Thirdly, There is one thing, that this way of instruction by parable hath above all other kinds of teaching ; it serves excellently for reproof ; for man is a proud creature, impatient of plain and open check and reprehension ; many times no way of dealing with him, when he hath offended, but by deceiving him with wiliness and craft ; he that comes rudely and plainly to reprehend, doth many times more hurt than good. I speak this not only in regard of ministerial reprehension, used by the preacher of the word, but of all other ; for to reprove offenders is a common duty, and belongs to every private man as well as to the minister. St Austin, in his book *de Civitate Dei*, handling the question, why in common calamities the

good do bear a part as well as the evil, amongst many other reasons, gives this as a special one, That good men are not careful enough in reprovng the errors of their offending brethren, but, by connivency and silence, in a manner partake in their sins, and, as it were by consent, make them their own.* It shall not be amiss, therefore, even for you of the laity, to hear something concerning this art of reprehension, as a duty concerning you as well as the preacher. For the wisdom and gentleness of a Christian are never better seen than in reprovng; now one common error of reprehenders is their over blunt and plain manner of rebuking; whilst they reprove the vice as if they hated the person, and upbraid rather than reprehend;† by this our importunity, we destroy more sinners than we save.

It is an excellent observation in St Chrysostom, “He, who is violently urged to shame, becomes insensible of shame.” Unseasonable and importunate reprehenders make offending persons to steel their forehead, and to set a good face upon their fact, as the phrase of the world is, and to seek out excuses and apologies for their sin. Tully tells us, that Antony the orator, being to defend a person who was accused of faction and sedition, bent his wits to maintain sedition was good, and not to be objected as a fault.‡

* De Civit. Dei, lib. i. c. 9.

† Dum sic objurgent, quasi odcrint.

‡ De Orat. lib. ii. §. 199.

That we force not our offending brethren unto this degree of impudency, let us consult with our charity, and know the quality and nature of the offender. Husbandmen tell us, that the young and tender branches of a vine are not to be pruned away with a knife, but gently pulled away by hand. Beloved, before we reprove, let us know the condition of our brother, whether he be not like the young vine, soft and tender, and so to be cured rather with the hand than with the knife ; and if he be grown so hard that he shall need the knife, we must not rashly adventure of it, but know there is a skill likewise in using the knife ; as Ehud, in the book of Judges, when he went to kill Eglon, carries not his dagger in his hand, but comes unto him with a present, and had his dagger girt privily under his garment ; or as a skilful physician of whom we read, being to heal an imposthume, and finding the sick person to be afraid of lancing, privily wrapped up his knife in a sponge, with which whilst he gently smoothed the plaçe, he lanced it ; so, Beloved, when we encounter our offending brother, we must not openly carry the dagger in our hand, for this were to defy our brother ; but we must wrap our knife in our sponge, and lance him whilst we smoothe him, and with all sweetness and gentleness of behaviour, cure him ; as Isaiah the prophet cured Hezekias, by laying a plaister of figs upon the sore.

Men when they have offended are like unto fire, we must take heed how we come too near them ;

and therefore as the Cherubims in the book of Isaiah's prophecy take a coal from the altar with the tongs ; so when the prophets dealt with them, they did not rudely handle them with their hands, but they came upon them warily under parables, as it were with the Cherubim tongs. How could Nathan have come so near unto king David, and drawn from him an acknowledgment of his sin, had he not come with the Cherubim tongs, and deceived him with a parable ? Or how should the prophet have made king Ahab see his error in letting go king Benhadad, if he had not, as it were, put a trick upon the king, and disguised both himself and his speech, and masked his errand with the parable of him who let go the prisoner, that was committed to his charge ? So that in this respect, if we would define a parable, we must pronounce it to be a civil or spiritual stratagem, by which persons, who need instruction, are honestly and piously beguiled for their own profit. No marvel, therefore, if our Saviour Christ in his preaching doth every where drive upon parables. For being to deliver to us so many lessons, so strange, so uncouth, so hard to learn, it was meet that he should make choice of that method of teaching, which hath most likelihood to prevail and commend them unto us.

ON
DEVOTION.

FROM A SERMON ON THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

DEVOTION in ordinary persons is a thing easily raised and easily allayed ; every strange event, every fear, every little calamity or distress is enough to put us into a strain of religious meditation ; but on the contrary side, a small matter doth again as quickly kill it. It seems to be like a quotidian ague, it comes by fits, every day it takes us, and every day it leaves us ; or like flax, or straw, or such light and dry stuff, which easily kindles, and as soon goes out. Indeed, it is a good thing when we find our hearts thus tender, and upon every occasion ready to melt into devotion for as to be quick of sense is a sign of life, and the purest and best complexions are quickest of sense, so it is a great argument of spiritual life in us, and of purity of soul, when we are so easily apt to fall upon devout meditation. But our Saviour requires yet another quality in our devotion ; it must be as lasting

as it is quick. Quintilian advises his orator to beware how he stand too long upon a place of passion, because that passion is not lasting, "and men cannot long weep."* But, Beloved, our Saviour gives other precepts of Christian oratory; he wills, if we will prevail with God, to insist and dwell long upon a place of religious passion, and provide that our tears may be perpetual and never dry; a hard thing you will take it to be, yet certainly it is very possible.

There is a question raised among the great masters of natural learning, whether, or no there may be a lamp so provided that it may burn forever? And they think it may be done. Beloved, our Saviour here teaches to practise that in spirituals, which hath been but a matter of speculation in naturals, even so to kindle and dress our lamps, as that they shall never go out; but be like unto the good housewife's candle in the Proverbs, that goes not out by night, or rather like the sun which shines for evermore. Daniel is said to have kindled this lamp, and to have made his prayer thrice a day, David seven times a day, but this is not enough; for in that the one is noted to have prayed seven times a day, the other thrice, it is likely at other times they did not pray; but God is not contented with this intermittent prayer; for if we look upon my text, we shall see that there must be no instant free from prayer; we must not measure

* Nihil facilius quam lacrymas inarescere. Inst. Orat. lib. vi. c. 1.

our prayers by number. Number is a discrete quantity, as we call it, the parts are not connext, are not tied together, there is a separation, a distance betwixt them. *That* that measures out our prayers must be line and length, some continued quantity, whose parts have no separation, no intermission; for so saith my text, "men ought always to pray." *Always*, the whole life of a man ought to be but one continual prayer.

But let us a little consider how possible this is, and see if there be any that doth necessarily enforce intermission of prayer. And *first*, that wonderful lamp, of which I but now told you great scholars had spoken, is not yet made, because they are not agreed of what matter to make it. And indeed in the world, things either are not at all, or being, do at length cease to be, either because there is no fit matter whence they may be framed, or else the matter of which they are made vanishes and dies. But, Beloved, prayer is a strange thing, it can never want matter; it will be made out of any matter, upon any occasion whatsoever; whatsoever you do, wheresoever you are, doth minister occasion of some kind of prayer; either of thanksgiving unto God for his goodness; or of praising and admiring his greatness; or of petitioning to him in case of want or distress; or bewailing some sin, or neglect committed. Is it the consideration of God's benefits, that will move us to thankfulness? Then certainly our thankfulness ought to be perpet-

ual ; there is no person so mean, no soul so poor, and distressed, and miserable, but if he search narrowly, he shall find some blessing for which he owes thankfulness unto God ; if nothing else, yet his very misery and distress is a singular blessing, if he use it to that end for which it was sent.

Is it the consideration of distress and affliction, and some degree of the curse of God upon us, that will stir our devotion ? Indeed, this is it with most men that kindles the fire of prayer in our hearts ; men for the most part are like unto the unslacked lime, which never heats till you throw water upon it ; for they never grow warm in devotion, till somewhat contrary to their wishes and disposition begins to afflict them ; then certainly our petitions to God ought never to cease ; for never was there man in any moment of his life entirely happy ; either in body, goods, or good name, every man hath some part of affliction. Blessing and cursing, though they seem to be enemies, and contrary one to another, yet are never severed, but go hand in hand together. Some men have more of one, some of another, but there is no man but hath some part of both ; wherefore as it seems not only prayer in general, but all kind, all sort of prayer, ought to be continual. Prayer must not be, as it were, of one thread, we must blend and temper together all kind of prayer, our praise or thanks, our sorrow, and make our prayer like Joseph's party coloured coat, like a beautiful garment of sundry colours. So then,

as fire goes not out so long as it hath matter to feed on, so what shall be able to interrupt our devotion, which hath so great and everlasting store of matter to continue it?

Secondly, many things in the world are necessarily intermitted, because they are tied to place or times; all places, all times are not convenient for them; but in case of prayer it is otherwise, it seeks no place, it attends no time; it is not necessary we should come to the church, or expect a Sabbath, or an holiday; for prayer indeed especially was the Sabbath ordained, yet prayer itself is sabbathless, and admits no rest, no intermission at all. If our hands be clean, we must, as our Apostle commands us, lift them up every where, at all times, and make every place a church, every day a Sabbath, every hour canonical. As you go to the market, as you stand in the streets, as you walk in the fields, in all these places you may pray as well and with as good an acceptance, as in the church; for you yourselves are temples of the Holy Ghost, if the grace of God be in you, more precious than any of those which are made with hands. The church of Rome hath made a part of her Breviary, or Common Prayer Book, which she calls, "The Itinerary of the Clergy," and it is a set form of prayer which clergymen ought to use when they set out on a journey, and are upon their way; why she calls it the Itinerary of the clergy, and impropriates it unto the clergy, I know not; she might for ought I see, have

called it the Itinerary of the Laity, since it is a duty belonging unto them as well as to the minister; yet, thus much the example of that church teaches, that no place, no occasion excludes prayer.

We read in our books, that one of the Ethnic Emperors was much taken, when he saw a woman going in the streets with a vessel of water on her head, her child at her girdle, her spindle in her hand twisting her thread as she went; he thought it a wonderful portion of diligence thus to employ all places and times indifferently. Beloved, if it be thus with bodily labour, how much more should it be so with the labour of the soul, which is far more easy, and needs not the help of any bodily instrument to act it? And how welcome a spectacle will it be, think you unto the great King of heaven and earth, when he shall see that no time, no occasion, is able to interrupt the labour of our devotion? Is it the time of feasting and jollity, which seems to prescribe against prayer? Indeed prayer is a grave and sober action, and seems not to stand with sport and merriment; yet notwithstanding it is of so pliable a nature, that it will accommodate and fit itself even to feasts and sportings. We read in the book of Daniel, that when Balshazzar made his great and last feast to his princes and lords, that they were merry, and drank wine in bowls, and "praised the gods of gold and silver, of brass, and of iron, of wood, and of stone." Dan. v. 4. Beloved, shall Ethnic feasts find room for their idolatrous wor-

ship, and praise of their golden, brazen, wooden gods, and shall not our Christian feasts yield some place for the praise of the true God of Heaven and earth? Last of all, is it time of sleep that seems to give a vacation and surcease to prayer? Beloved, sleep is no part of our life, we are not accountable for things done or not done then. Tertullian tells us, “that an unclean dream shall no more condemn us, than a dream of martyrdom shall crown us;”* and the casuists do teach, that loose dreams in the night shall never be laid to our charge, if they be not occasioned by lewd thoughts in the day; for they are not thoughts springing out, but cast into our hearts by the devil, upon his score shall they go, and we shall not reckon for them; so then, though sleep partake not of our devotion, yet this hinders not the continualness of it. Aristotle tells us, that men who sleep perceive not any part of time to have passed, because they tie the last moment of their watching with the first moment of their awaking, as having no sense of what past betwixt, and so account of it as one continued time. Beloved, if we do with our devotion as we do with our time, if we shut up the last instant of our watching with a prayer, and resume that prayer at the first instant of our waking, we have made it one continued prayer without interruption.

Thirdly, and last of all, the greatest reason why

* Non magis enim ob stupri visionem damnabimur, quam ob martyrii coronabimur. De Anima, c. 45.

many businesses of the world cannot be acted perpetually, is, because they must give room to others. The actions of the world are many times like unto quarrelsome birds, two of them cannot peaceably dwell in one bush.* But prayer hath that property which Aristotle gives unto substance, it is at peace, and holds good terms with all our cares of the world. No business so great, or that so much takes up the time and mind of a man, as that it needs exclude prayer ; it is of a soft and sociable nature, and it can incorporate and sink into our business like water into ashes, and never increase the bulk of them ; it can mix and interweave itself with all our cares, without any hindrance unto them ; nay, it is a great strength and improvement unto them. “For,” saith St Chrysostom, “as they that build houses of clay, must every where place studs and pieces of timber and wood, so to strengthen the building ; so all our cares of this life, which are no better than buildings of dirt and clay, we must strengthen and compact together with frequent and often prayer, as with bonds and props of timber.” Let no man therefore think, that it is too much to require at the hands of men, at one and the selfsame instant, both to attend their vocation and their prayer ; for the mind of a man is a very agile and nimble substance, and it is a wonderful thing to see how many things it will at one moment apply itself unto without any confusion or let. Look but upon

* *Unicum arbustum non alit duos erithacos,*

the musician while he is in his practice, he tunes his voice, fingers his instrument, reads his dittay, marks his note, observes the time, all these things, at one and the same instant, without any distraction or impediment ; thus should men do in case of devotion, and in the common acts of our vocation, let prayer bear a part ; for prayer added unto diligent labour is like a sweet voice to a well tuned instrument, and makes a pleasing harmony in the ears of God. “The good housewife,” saith St Chrysostom, “as she sits at her distaff, and reaches out her hand to the flax, may even then lift up, if not her eyes, yet her mind unto heaven, and consecrate and hallow her work with earnest prayer unto God.” “The husbandman,” saith St Jerom, “at the plough tail, may sing an hallelujah, the sweating harvestman may refresh himself with a psalm, the gardener, whilst he prunes his vines and arbours, may record some one of David’s sonnets.”*

The reason of this pliable nature of prayer is, because it is a thing of another condition than the acts of the world are ; it requires no outward labour of the body, no outward fashion and manner of doing, but is internally acted in the soul itself, and leaves the outward members of our bodies free to perform those offices which require their help. Our legal business in the world must be done in certain forms of breves

* Arator stivam tenens, hallelujah secantat, sudans messor psalmis sese evocat, et curva attendens falce vites vinitor aliquid Davidicum canit. Epist. lib. ii. ad Marcellum.

and writs, and I know not what variety of outward ceremony, or else it is not warrantable; but prayer, Beloved, is not like an obligation or indenture, it requires no outward solemnity of words and ceremony. Quaint, witty, and set forms of prayer proceed many times from ostentation more than devotion; for any thing I know, it requires not so much as the moving of the lips or tongue; nay, one thing I know more, that the most forcible prayer transcends and far exceeds all power of words. For St Paul, speaking unto us concerning the most effectual kind of prayer, calls it "sighs and groans that cannot be expressed." Rom. viii. 26. Nothing does cry so loud in the ears of God, as the sighing of a contrite and earnest heart. We read in the xiv of Exodus, that God speaks unto Moses, "Why criest thou unto me? command the children of Israel that they go forward;" yet there appears not in the text any prayer that Moses made, or word that he spake. It was the earnestness of Moses' heart, that was so high-voiced, that did so sound in the ears of the Lord. Wherefore true prayer hath no commerce with the outward members of the body; for it requires not the voice, but the mind; not the stretching of the hands, but the intention of the soul; not any outward shape or carriage of the body, but the inward behaviour of the understanding.

INTERPRETATION
OF
SCRIPTURE PRECEPTS.

FROM A SERMON ON PEACE.

IF Christ and his Apostles teach, as sometimes they do, "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and these things shall be cast in upon you;" that "Godliness hath the promise both of this life, and of the life to come;" it is not presently to be conceived, that every true Christian man shall doubtless come on, and thrive in the world. That which they teach is no more but this, That we ought not to despair of the providence of God; for look what is the reward and portion of virtue and industry in other men, the same and much more shall it have in Christians, their goodness shall have the like approbation, their moral virtues shall have like esteem, their honest labours shall thrive alike; if sometimes it hath fallen out otherwise, it is but the

same lot which hath befallen virtue and honesty, even in the Pagan as well as the Christian. In the fifth of St Matthew, where Christ teacheth us, that the meek spirited shall possess the earth, think we that it was the intent of the Holy Ghost to make men lords of the earth, to endow them with territories and large dominions? That which he teaches us, is but a moral lesson, such as common reason and experience confirms, that meek and mild spirited men are usually the quietest possessors of what they hold.

But that these speeches, and such as these in the New Testament, be not wronged by us, by being drawn to our avaricious conceits, and thought to halt, if sometime the meek spirited become a spoil to the extortioner, and be stript of all he hath, give me leave to commend unto you one rule for the interpretation of them, which will give much ease to unstable minds. The Holy Ghost delivering general propositions in things, subject to variety and human casualties, is to be understood for the truth of them, as far as the things themselves are capable of truth, and according to the certainty of them. There are many propositions framed, even in natural things, of eternal truth; no instance neither of time nor person can be brought to disprove them; our daily experience evermore finds them so. There is a second order of things created by God himself, subject to mutability, which sometimes are not all, and being produced, owe their being sometimes to one cause, sometimes to another, the

efficacy of the cause no way being determined to this effect, but of itself indifferent to produce it or not. The managing of affairs, whether in public of commonweals, or, in private, of any man's particular state or calling, moral rules of behaviour and carriage, yea, all things that are spoken concerning the temporal weal or wo of actions good or bad, they are all ranged in this second order. Now in all these things it is impossible there should be propositions made of unavoidable certainty. If the rules and observations drawn for our direction, usually and in the ordinary course of events, hold current, it is enough to make them maxims of truth ; it matters not though at some time, upon some occasions, in some person, they fail.

Now from the condition of these things, the propositions made by the Holy Ghost himself, are by their author not exempted. In the book of the Proverbs, the Holy Ghost hath registered such store of moral wisdom, and precepts of carriage in temporal matters, that all the wisdom of the Heathen most renowned for morality comes far short of it. These precepts, though with us they have, as indeed they ought to have, much more credibility, as delivered unto us by an author of surer observation, and exempted from all possibility of error ; yet, notwithstanding, in regard of the things themselves, they are of the like certainty, of the same degree of truth, when we find them in the writings of these famous Ethnics, whom it pleased the Holy Spirit to endue with natural wisdom, and

moral discretion, which they have, when we read them registered in the oracles of God, and the same uncertainty have they, in regard of some particulars, when they be spoken by Solomon, which they have, when they are uttered by Plato, or Euripides. Solomon much inveigheth against the folly of suretiship; was it therefore never heard of, that a wise man was surety for his neighbour with good success? Julius Caesar, when he thought to have upheld his estate through mercy and clemency, lost his life; is it therefore false which Solomon teacheth, that "mercy upholdeth the throne of the king?" Prov. xx. 28. He knew well, and his son had dear experience of it, that the people's hearts are won and kept by mild and merciful dealing, rather than by rough and tyrannous proceedings; yet he could not be ignorant, that even kings sometimes reap mischief, and death there, where they have plentifully sowed love and mercy.

Thus then, and no otherwise, are we to understand the Holy Ghost preaching unto us the reward of the meek spirited, and the promises of this life to the godly. For we are not to suppose, that God, in his ordinary proceedings concerning his elect, exempts things from that mutability and change, to which he made them subject in the day of their creation. "All things come alike to all," saith the wise man, "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and unclean, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good so is the sinner."

and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." Eccles. ix. 2. Which speech is true, in regard of those human casualties, from which the good Christian is no more exempted, than the honest Pagan. But it is a maxim of eternal truth, and the joint conspiracy of heaven and hell shall never be able to infringe it, "That all things work for the good of them that fear God." Rom. viii. 28. Though sometime the meek spirited men be turned out of house and home, and the godly man have not a place whereon to rest his head. By this then it appears, that the title of Christian men unto temporal blessings is not out of any divine right, giving undoubted assurance, but only of common equity and congruity, by which it pleaseth God usually to crown honest counsels with good success.

ABUSES OF SCRIPTURE.

FROM A SERMON ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

ONE very potent and strong mean, [of false interpretation of Scripture,] is the exceeding affection and love unto our own opinions and conceits. For grown we are unto extremities on both hands ; we cannot with patience, either admit of other men's opinions, or endure that our own should be withstood. As it was in the Lacedemonian army, almost all were captains* ; so, in these disputes, all will be leaders ; and we take ourselves to be much discountenanced, if others think not as we do. So that the complaint, which one makes concerning the dissension of physicians about the diseases of our bodies, is true likewise in these disputes which concern the cure of our souls. " From hence have sprung those miserable contentions about the distemper of our *souls*, singularity alone, and that we will not seem to stand as cyphers to make up the sum of other men's opinions,

* Schol. in Thucyd.

being cause enough to make us disagree.*' A fault anciently amongst the Christians so apparent, that it needed not an apostolical spirit to discover it, the very heathen themselves, to our shame and confusion, have justly, judiciously, and sharply tax us for it. Ammianus Marcellinus passing his censure upon Constantius the Emperor; "The Christian religion," saith he, and they are words well worth your marking, "the Christian religion, a religion of great simplicity and perfection, he troubled with dotage and superstition. For going about rather perplexedly to search the controversies, than gravely to compose them, he raised great stirs, and by disputing, spread them far and wide, whilst he went about to make himself sole lord and commander of the whole profession." †

Now, that it may appear wherefore I have noted this, it is no hard thing for a man that hath wit, and is strongly possessed of an opinion, and resolute to maintain it, to find some places of Scripture, which by good handling will be wooed to cast a favourable countenance upon it. Pythagoras's scholars having been

* *Hinc illae circa aegros miserae sententiarum concertationes, nullo idem censente, né videatur accessio alterius. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxix. c. 5.*

† *Christianam religionem absolutam et simplicem anili superstitione confundens. In qua scrutanda perplexiùs quam componenda gratiùs, excitavit dissidia plurima, quae progressa fusiùs aluit concertatione verborum,—dum ritum omnem ad suum trahere conatur arbitrium. Lib. xxi. c. 16.*

bred up in the doctrine of numbers, when afterward they diverted upon the studies of nature, fancied unto themselves somewhat in natural bodies like unto numbers, and thereupon fell into a conceit, that numbers were the principles of them. So fares it with him, that to the reading of Scripture comes fore-possessed with some opinion. As Antiphéron Orietes in Aristotle* thought, that every where he saw his own shape and picture going afore him ; so in divers parts of Scripture where these men walk, they will easily persuade themselves, that they see the image of their own conceits.

It was, and is to this day, a fashion in the hotter countries, at noon, when the sun is in his strength, to retire themselves to their closets or beds, if they were at home, to cool and shady places, if they were abroad, to avoid the inconvenience of the heat of it. To this the Spouse in the Canticles alluding, calls after her beloved as after a shepherd, “ Shew me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou dost rest at noon.” Cant. i. 7. The Donatists conceiting unto themselves, that the church was shut up in them alone, being urged by the fathers to shew how the church, being universal, came on a sudden thus to be confined to Afric ; they had presently their Scripture for it, for so they found it

* Meteor. lib. iii. c. 4. ibique Alexander Aphrodisacus et Olympiodorus.

written in the Canticles, "Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou dost rest at noon." In which text, *meridies*, "noon," doubtless, as they thought, was their southern country of Afric, where the shepherd of Israel was, and no where else, to feed his flocks. I may not trouble you with instances in this kind; little observation is able to furnish the man of slenderest reading with abundance. The texts of Scripture, which are specially subject to this abuse, are those that are of ambiguous and doubtful meaning. For as Thucydides observes of "the fat and fertile places of Greece, that they were evermore the occasions of stirs and seditions;" the neighbouring nations every one striving to make itself lord of them; so is it with these places that are so fertile, as it were, of interpretation, and yield a multiplicity of sense; they are the school of exercises for good wits to prove masteries in, where every one desires to be lord and absolute.

A *second* thing occasioning us to transgress against Scripture, and the discreet and sober handling of it, is our too quick and speedy entrance upon the practice of interpreting it, in our young and green years, before that time and experience have ripened us, and settled our conceits. For that which in all other business, and here likewise doth most especially commend us, is our cautelous and wary handling it. But this is a flower seldom seen in youth's garden. Aristotle, differencing age and youth, makes it a property

of youth, “to suppose they know all things, and to be bold in affirming;” and the Heathen rhetorician could tell us, that by this so speedy entering upon action, and so timely venting our crude and unconcocted studies, “a thing which in all cases is most pernicious; presumption is greater than strength;”* after the manner of those, who are lately recovered out of some great sickness, in whom appetite is stronger than digestion. These are they, who take the greatest mysteries of the Christian religion to be the fittest arguments to spend themselves upon. So Eckius, in his *Chrysopassus*, a work of his so termed, wherein he discusses the question of predestination, in the very entrance of his work tells us, that he therefore enterprized to handle this argument, because, forsooth, he thought it to be the fittest question in which he might “exercise his youthful and ardent fancy.”† The ancient masters of fence amongst the Romans were wont to set up a post, and cause their young scholars to practice upon it, and to foin and fight with it, as with an adversary. Instead of a post, this young fencer hath set himself up one of the deepest mysteries of our profession, to practice his freshmanship upon. Which quality, when once it finds Scripture for its object, how great inconvenience it brings with it, needs no large discourse to prove.

* *Quod est ubique perniciosissimum, praevenit vires fiducia.*
Quintil. *Instit. Orat.* lib. xii. c. 6.

† *Juveniles calores exercere.*

St Jerom, a man not too easily brought on to acknowledge the errors of his writings, among those few things which he doth retract, censures nothing so sharply as the mistake of his youth in this kind. He thought it one of the greatest sins of his youth, "That being carried away through an inconsiderate heat in his studies of Scripture, he adventured to interpret Obadiah the prophet allegorically, when as yet he knew not the historical meaning."* Old men, saith our best natural master, by reason of the experience of their often mistakes, are hardly brought constantly to affirm any thing, "they will always cautelously interline their speeches with *it may bees*, and *peradventures*."† and other such particles of wariness and circumspection. This old men's modesty, of all other things best fits us in perusing those hard and obscure texts of holy Scripture. Out of which conceit it is, that we see St Austin, in his books *de Genesi ad litteram*, to have written only by way of questions and interrogations, after the manner of Aristotle in the Problems, "That he might not," for so he gives his reason, "by being over positive prejudice others, and peradventure truer interpretations; that every one might chuse according to his liking; and where his understanding cannot attain unto the sense of it,

* In adolescentia provocatus ardore et studio Scripturarum, allegoricè interpretatus sum Abdiam prophetam cujus historiam nesciebam. Præfat. in Abdiam.

† Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. c. 15.

let him give that honour and reverence, which is due unto the Scripture, and carry himself with that awe and respect which befits him.”* Wherefore not without especial providence it is, that the Holy Ghost by St Paul, giving precepts to Timothy, concerning the quality of those who were to be admitted to the distributing of God’s Holy Word, expressly prescribes against a *young scholar*, “lest,” saith he, “he be puffed up.” 1 Tim. iii. 6. For as it hath been noted of men, who are lately grown rich, that they differ from other rich men only in this, “That commonly they have all the faults that rich men have and many more;” so it is as true in those, who have lately attained to some degree and mediocrity of knowledge. Look what infirmities learned men have, the same have they in greater degree, and many more besides. Wherefore if Hippocrates in his Physician required these two things, “great industry, and long experience,” the one as tillage to sow the seed, the other as time and season of the year to bring it to maturity; then certainly by so much the more are these two required in the spiritual physician, by how much he is the physician to a more excellent part.

I will add yet one *third* motioner to this abuse of Scriptures, and that is, the too great presumption

* Non aliquid unum temere affirmans cum praejudicio alterius expositionis fortasse melioris, ut pro suo modulo eligat quisque quod capere possit; ubi autem intelligere non potest, Scripturae Dei det honorem, sibi timorem. De Genesi ad literam. lib. i. 40.

upon the strength and subtilty of our own wits. That which the Roman priest sometimes told an over pleasant and witty Vestal Virgin, "The gods ought to be worshipped, not curiously, but in the simplicity of a pious mind,"* hath in this great work of exposition of Scripture, an especial place. The holy things of God must be handled with fear and reverence, not with wit and dalliance. The dangerous effects of this have appeared, not in the green tree only, in young heads, but in men of constant age, and great place in the church. For this was that which undid Origen, a man of as great learning and industry, as ever the church had any; whilst in the sublimity of his wit, in his comments on Scripture, conceiving meteors and airy speculations, he brought forth those dangerous errors, which drew upon his person the church's heaviest censure, and upon posterity the loss of his works. Subtile witted men in nothing so much miscarry as in the too much pleasing themselves in the goodness of their own conceits; where the like sometimes befalls them, which befel Zeuxis the painter, who having to the life pictured an old woman, so pleased himself with the conceit of his work, that he died with laughing at it.

Heliodorus, bishop of Tricca in Thessaly, the author of the Ethiopic story, a polite and elegant I confess, but a loose and wanton work, being summoned

* *Coli Deos sancte magis quam scite.*

by a provincial Synod, was told, that which was true, That his work did rather endanger the manners, than profit the wits of his reader, as nourishing loose and wanton conceits in the heads of youth ; and having his choice given him, either to abolish his work, or to leave his bishopric ; not willing to lose the reputation of his wit, chose rather to resign his place in the church, and as I verily think his part in heaven.* And not in private persons alone, but even in whole nations, shall we find remarkable examples of mis-carriage in this kind. The Grecians, till barbarism began to steal in upon them, were men of wondrous subtily of wit, and naturally over indulgent unto themselves in this quality. Those deep and subtile heresies concerning the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, the union and division of the divine substance and persons, were all of them begotten in the heat of their wits ; yea, by the strength of them were they conceived and born, and brought to that growth, that if it had been possible for the gates of hell to prevail against the church, they would have prevailed this way.

* Would that the author had not drawn a conclusion so harsh from a tale of such dubious credit as this related by Nicephorus alone. Vid. Valesium ad Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 22.

LEARNING
REQUISITE FOR EXPLAINING
THE SCRIPTURES.

FROM A SERMON ON ABUSES OF SCRIPTURE.

So great a thing, as the skill of exposition of the word and Gospel is, so fraught with multiplicity of authors, so full of variety of opinion, must needs be confessed to be a matter of great learning, and that cannot, especially in our days, in short time, with a mediocrity of industry, be attained. For if in the Apostles' times, when as yet much of Scripture was scarcely written, when God wrought with men miraculously to inform their understanding, and supplied by revelation what man's industry could not yield; if I say, in these times St Paul required "diligent reading," 1 Tim. iv. 13; and expressly forbad greenness of scholarship; much more then are these conditions required in our times, wherein God doth not supply by miracle our natural defects, and yet the burden of

our profession is infinitely increased. All that was necessary in the Apostles' times, is now necessary, and much more. For if we add unto the growth of Christian learning, as it was in the Apostles' times, but this one circumstance, (to say nothing of all the rest,) which naturally befalls our times, and could not be required at the hands of those who guided the first ages of the church; that is, the knowledge of the state and succession of doctrine in the church from time to time, a thing very necessary for the determining the controversies of these our days; how great a portion of our labour and industry would this alone require? Wherefore, if Quintilian thought it necessary to admonish young men, that they should not presume themselves "sufficiently provided with knowledge, and as having the sanction of the learned in their favour, merely by being masters of some short and common manual of rhetoric;"* if he thought fit thus to do in an art of so inferior and narrow a sphere, much more is it behoveful, that young students, in so high, so spacious, so large a profession, be advised not to think themselves sufficiently provided upon their acquaintance with some *notitia*, or system of some technical divine.

Look upon those sons of Anak, those giant like, voluminous writers of Rome, in regard of whom, our

* — Satis instructos, si quem ex iis, qui breves circumferuntur, artis libellum edidicerint, et velut decretis technicorum tutos putent. Inst. Orat. lib. ii. c. 13.

little tractates, and pocket volumes in this kind, what are they but as grasshoppers? I speak not this like some seditious or factious spy, to bring weakness of hands, or melting of heart, upon any of God's people; but to stir up and kindle in you the spirit of industry, to enlarge your conceits, and not to suffer your labours to be copst and mued up within the poverty of some pretended method. I will speak as Joshua did to his people, "Let us not fear the people of that land, they are as meat unto us, their shadow is departed from them; the Lord is with us, fear them not." Numb. xiv. 9. Only let us not think, that the conquest will be gotten by sitting still and wishing all were well;* or that the walls of these strong cities will fall down, if we only walk about them, and blow rams' horns. But as the voice of God's people sometime was, "by the sword of God and of Gideon," Judg. vii. 18, so that which here gives the victory must be the grace of God and our industry. For by this circumsised, narrow, and penurious form of study, we shall be no more able to keep pace with them, than a child can with Hercules.

* Stultitia est sedendo aut votis debellari credere posse. Liv. Hist. lib. xxii. c. 14.

ON THE
AID OF THE SPIRIT
IN
PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

FROM A SERMON ON ABUSES OF SCRIPTURE.

As for those marvellous discourses of some, framed upon presumption of the Spirit's help in private, in judging or interpreting of difficult places of Scripture, I must needs confess, I have often wondered at the boldness of them. The Spirit is a thing of dark and secret operation, the manner of it none can descry. As underminers are never seen till they have wrought their purpose, so the Spirit is never perceived but by its effects. The effects of the Spirit, as far as they concern knowledge and instruction, are not particular information for resolution in any doubtful case, for this were plainly revelation, but, as the Angel which was sent unto Cornelius informs him not

not, but sends him to Peter to school ; so the Spirit teaches not, but stirs up in us a desire to learn ; desire to learn makes us thirst after the means ; and pious sedulity and carefulness make us watchful in the choice, and diligent in the use of our means.

The promise to the Apostles of the Spirit, which should "lead them into all truth," John xvi. 13, was made good unto them by private and secret informing their understandings, with the knowledge of high and heavenly mysteries, which as yet had never entered into the conceit of any man. The same promise is made to us, but fulfilled after another manner. For what was written by revelation in their hearts, for our instruction have they written in their books. To us, for information, otherwise than out of these books, the Spirit speaks not. When the Spirit regenerates a man, it infuses no knowledge of any point of faith, but sends him to the church, and to the Scriptures. When it stirs him up to newness of life, it exhibits not unto him an inventory of his sins, as hitherto unknown ; but either supposes them known in the law of nature, of which no man can be ignorant ; or sends him to learn them from the mouth of his teachers.

More than this in the ordinary proceeding of the Holy Spirit, in matter of instruction, I yet could never descry. So that to speak of the help of the Spirit in private, in dijudicating, or in interpreting of Scripture, is to speak they know not what. Which I do the rather note, first, because by experience we have

learnt, how apt men are to call their private conceits the Spirit; and again, because it is the especial error with which St Austin long ago charged this kind of men; "By so much the more prone are they to kindle schism and contention in the church, by how much they seem to themselves to be endued with a more eminent measure of Spirit than their brethren;"* whilst, as St Basil speaks, "under pretence of interpretation, they violently broach their own conceits." Great then is the danger in which they wade, which take upon them this business of interpretation. "The rashness," saith St Austin, "of those that aver uncertain and doubtful interpretations, for catholic and absolute, can hardly escape the sin of sacrilege."†

* Tanto sunt ad seditionem faciliores, quanto sibi videntur spiritu excellere.

† Temeritas asserendae incertae dubiaeque opinionis, difficile sacrilegii crimen evitat.

THE
LITERAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE
TO BE
PREFERRED.

FROM A SERMON ON ABUSES OF SCRIPTURE.

THE literal, plain, and uncontroversable meaning of Scripture, without any addition or supply by way of interpretation, is that alone which for ground of faith we are necessarily bound to accept, except it be there where the Holy Ghost himself treads us out another way. I take not this to be any peculiar conceit of mine, but that unto which our church stands necessarily bound. When we receded from the church of Rome, one motive was, because she added unto Scripture her glosses as canonical, to supply what the plain text of Scripture could not yield. If, in place of her's, we set up our own glosses, thus to do, were nothing else but to pull down Baal, and set up

an ephod; to run round, and meet the church of Rome again in the same point in which at first we left her. But the plain, evident, and demonstrative ground of this rule, is this; *That* authority which doth warrant our faith unto us, must every way be free from all possibility of error. For let us but once admit of this, that there is any possibility that any one point of faith should not be true; if it be once granted, that I may be deceived in what I have believed, how can I be assured that in the end I shall not be deceived? If the author of faith may alter, or if the evidence and assurance that he hath left us be not pregnant, and impossible to be defeated, there is necessarily opened an inlet to doubtfulness and wavering, which the nature of faith excludes.

That faith therefore may stand unshaken, two things are of necessity to concur. First, That the author of it be such a one as can by no means be deceived, and this can be none but God. Secondly, That the words and text of this author upon whom we ground, must admit of no ambiguity, no uncertainty of interpretation. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall provide himself to battle?" 1 Cor. xiv. 8. If the words admit a double sense, and I follow one, who can assure me that that which I follow is the truth? For infallibility either in judgment, or interpretation, or whatsoever, is annexed neither to the see of any bishop, nor to the fathers, nor to the councils, nor to the church, nor to any

created power whatsoever. This doctrine of the literal sense was never grievous or prejudicial to any, but only to those who were inwardly conscious that their positions were not sufficiently grounded. When Cardinal Cajetan, in the days of our grandfathers, had forsaken that vein of postilling and allegorising on Scripture, which for a long time had prevailed in the church, and betaken himself unto the literal sense; it was a thing so distasteful unto the church of Rome, that he was forced to find out many shifts, and make many apologies for himself. The truth is, as it will appear to him that reads his writings, this sticking close to the literal sense was that alone, which made him to shake many of those tenets, upon which the church of Rome and the reformed churches differ.

But when the importunity of the reformers, and the great credit of Calvin's writings in that kind, had forced the divines of Rome to level their interpretations by the same line; when they saw that no pains, no subtilty of wit was strong enough to defeat the literal evidence of Scripture, it drave them on those desperate shelves, on which at this day they stick, to call in question, as far as they durst, the credit of the Hebrew text, and countenance against it a corrupt translation; to add traditions unto Scripture, and to make the church's interpretation, so pretended, to be above exception. As for that restriction which is usually added to this rule, that the literal sense is to be taken, if no absurdity follow, though I acknowledge

it to be sound and good, yet my advice is that we entertain it warily. St Basil thought the precept of Christ to the rich man in the Gospel, "Go sell all that thou hast, and give unto the poor," Matt. xix. 21, to be spoken as a command universally and eternally binding all Christians without exception. And making this objection, how possibly such a life could be amongst Christians, since where all were sellers, none could be buyers; "Ask not me," saith he, "the sense of my Lord's commands. He that gave the law, can provide to give it possibility of being kept, without any absurdity at all." Which speech, howsoever we may suppose the occasion of it to be mistaken, yet it is of excellent use to repress our boldness, whereby many times, under pretence of some inconvenience, we hinder Scripture from that latitude of sense, of which it is naturally capable.

You know the story of the Roman captain in Gellius, and what he told the shipwright, that chose rather to interpret, than to execute his lord's command; "The office of the commander is then set at nought, when the commanded, instead of due obedience, gives unasked advice."* It will certainly, in the end, prove safer for us to entertain God's commandments with the respect which is due, than to interpret them

* *Corrumpi atque dissolvi omne imperantis officium, si quis ad id quod facere jussus est non obsequio debito, sed consilio non desiderato respondeat.*

with a nicety which is not required. Those other ways of interpretation, whether it be by allegorising, or allusion, or whatsoever, the best that can be said of them, is that which St Basil hath pronounced, "We account of them as of trim, elegant, and witty speeches, but we refuse to accept of them, as of undoubted truths." And though of some part of these, that may be said which one said of his own work, "In respect of any profit comes by them, they are but sport, but in respect of the pains taken in making of them, they are labour and travel;"* yet much of them is of excellent use in private, either to raise our affections, or to spend our meditations, or, so it be with modesty, to practise our gifts of wit to the honour of him that gave them. For if we absolutely condemn these interpretations, then must we condemn a great part of antiquity, who are very much conversant in this kind of interpreting. For the most partial for antiquity cannot chuse but see and confess thus much, that for the literal sense of the interpreters of our own times because of their skill in the original languages, their care of pressing the circumstances and coherence of the text, of comparing like places of Scripture with like, have generally surpassed the best of the ancients. Which I speak not to discountenance antiquity, but that all ages, all persons may have their due.

* Quod ad usum pertinet, lusi, quod ad molestiam laboravi.
Auson. Technopæg. xii.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

FROM A SERMON ON ST. PETER'S FALL.

OF all the vices which our nature is subject unto, spiritual pride is the most dangerous, and of which we had need be most cautelous; for whereas all other vices proceed from some ill in us, from some sinful imbecility of our nature, this alone arises out of our good parts; other sins drew their being from that original corruption, which we draw from our parents, but this may seem to be the mother of that; as by which even natures unstained, and in their primitive purity, may most easily fall. And therefore, not without some probability is it concluded in the schools, That no other crime could throw the angels down from heaven but this. That which one leaves for a memorial to great men, that in dangerous times, 'it was a matter of like danger to have a great name, as an ill *;' that may I pronounce of a Christian man, the danger of his innocency is not much less than of his faults. For this devil, when he cannot drive us to

* Non minus periculum ex magna famæ quam ex mala. Tacit. vi.t. Agricolaë. c. 5.

despair by reason of our sin, takes another course, to see if he can make us presume upon conceit of our righteousness; for, when by the preventing grace of God, we keep ourselves from greater offences, if we find ourselves to have a love unto the word of God, and the true professors of it, to be rich in alms deeds, to have a part in other acts of righteousness, he makes us first take notice of these good things in us; notice taken, draws us to love and admire them in us; self-love draws us on to compare ourselves with others, then to prefer ourselves before others, and thirdly to disdain others in respect of ourselves.

Here now is a gap laid open to a thousand inconveniences; and hence it is that we see divers times men, otherwise of life and reputation pure and unblameable, upon conceit and inconsiderateness, by a secret judgement of God; to fall upon extremes no less fearful, than are the issues of open profaneness and impiety. To cut off therefore all way that may be opened to let in spiritual pride, it hath pleased God to make use of this as of a sovereign remedy, namely, to permit, even in his most chosen vessels, evermore secret and hidden infirmities, and some times gross and open scapes, which may serve, when they look into themselves, to abate all overweening conceit of their own righteousness, and when they shall look into the errors of others, may be secret admonitioners unto them, not rashly to condemn them considering their own weakness.

WHETHER
THE CHURCH MAY ERR
IN
FUNDAMENTALS.

FROM A TRACT ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE question is, "Whether the church may err in fundamentals?"

First, I answer, That every Christian may err that will; for if men might not err wilfully, then there could be no heresy; heresy being nothing else but wilful error. For if we account mistakes befalling us through human frailties to be heresies, then it will follow, that every man since the Apostles' time was an heretic; for never yet was there any Christian, the Apostles only excepted, which did not, in something concerning the Christian faith, mistake himself, either by addition or omission, or misinterpretation of something. An evident sign of this truth you may see in this; by the providence of God, the writings of many learned Christians, from the Spring of Christianity, have been left unto posterity; and amongst all

those, scarcely any is to be found who is not confessed on all hands to have mistaken some things, and those mistakes for the most part stand upon record by some, who purposely observed them. Neither let this, I beseech you, beget in you a conceit, as if I meant to disgrace those whose labours have been and are of infinite benefit in the church. For if Aristotle, and Aphrodisens, and Galen, and the rest of those excellent men, whom God hath indued with extraordinary portions of natural knowledge, have with all thankful and ingenuous men throughout all generations retained their credit entire, notwithstanding it is acknowledged, that they have all of them in many things swerved from the truth; then why should not Christians express the same ingenuity to those, who have laboured before us in the exposition of the Christian faith, and highly esteem them for their works' sake, their many infirmities notwithstanding?

You will say, that for private persons, it is confessed, they may and daily do err; but can Christians err by whole shoals, by armies meeting for defence of the truth in synods and councils, especially general; which are countenanced by the great fable of all the world, the Bishop of Rome?

I answer, To say that councils may not err, though private persons may, at first sight is a merry speech; as if a man should say, That every single soldier indeed may run away, but a whole army cannot, especially having Hannibal for their captain. And since it

is confessed that all single persons not only may, but do err, it will prove a very hard matter to gather out of these a multitude, of whom being gathered together, we may be secured they cannot err. I must for mine own part confess, that councils and synods not only may and have erred, but considering the means how they are managed, it were a great marvel if they did not err; for what men are they of whom those great meetings do consist? Are they the best, the most learned, the most virtuous, the most likely to walk uprightly? No, the greatest, the most ambitious, and many times men neither of judgment nor learning; such are they of whom these bodies do consist. And are these men in common equity likely to determine for truth? *Sicut in vita, ita in causis quoque spes improbas habent*, as Quintilian speaks.* Again, when such persons are thus met, their way to proceed to conclusion, is not by weight of reason, but by multitude of votes and suffrages, as if it were a maxim in nature, that the greater part must needs be the better; whereas, our common experience shews, that, *Nunquam ita bene agitur cum rebus humanis, ut plures sint meliores*. It was never heard in any profession, that conclusion of truth went by plurality of voices, the Christian profession only excepted; and I

* Instit. Orat. I. xii. c. 1.—This is elsewhere thus translated by the author. "Who, as in their lives, so in the causes they undertake, nourish hopes full of improbity."

have often mused how it comes to pass, that the way which in all other sciences is not able to warrant the poorest conclusion, should be thought sufficient to give authority to conclusions in divinity, the supreme empress of sciences. But I see what it is that is usually pleaded, and with your leave I will a little consider of it.

It is given out, that Christian meetings have such an assistance of God and his blessed Spirit, that let their persons be what they will, they may assure themselves against all possibility of mistaking; and this is that, they say, which to this way of ending controversies, which in all other sciences is so contemptible, gives a determining to theological disputes of so great authority. And this music of the Spirit is so pleasing, that it hath taken the reformed party too; for with them likewise all things at length end in the Spirit, but with this difference, that those of Rome confine the Spirit to the bishops and councils of Rome; but the Protestant enlargeth this working of the Spirit, and makes it the director of private meditations. I should doubtless do great injury to the goodness of God, if I should deny the sufficient assistance of God to the whole world, to preserve them both from sin in their actions, and damnable errors in their opinions; much more should I do it, if I denied it to the church of God; but this assistance of God may very well be, and yet men may fall into sin and errors. St Paul, preaching to the Gentiles, tells

them, that God was with them in so palpable a manner, that even by groping they might have found him; yet both he and we know what the Gentiles did. Christ hath promised his perpetual assistance to his church; but hath he left any prophecy, that the church should perpetually adhere to him? If any man think he hath, it is his part to inform us where this prophecy is to be found. That matters may go well with men, two things must concur, the assistance of God to men, and the adherence of men to God; if either of these be deficient, there will be little good done. Now the first of these is never deficient, but the second is very often; so that the promise of Christ's perpetual presence made unto the church, infers not at all any presumption of infallibility.

As for that term of "Spirit," which is so much taken up to open the danger that lurks under it, we must a little distinguish upon the word. This term "Spirit of God" either signifies the third person in the blessed Trinity, or else the wonderful power of miracles, of tongues, of healing, &c. which was given to the Apostles, and other of the primitive Christians, at the first preaching of the Gospel; but both these meanings are strangers to our purpose. The Spirit of God, as it concerns the question here in hand, signifies either something within us, or something without us; without us, it signifies the written word, recorded in the books of the prophets, apostles, and Evangelists, which are metonymically called the Spirit,

because the Holy Ghost spake those things by their mouths when they lived, and now speaks unto us by their pens when they are dead. If you please to receive it, this alone is left as Christ's vicar in his absence, to give us directions both in our actions and opinions; he that tells you of another Spirit in the church to direct you in your way, may as well tell you a tale of a walking spirit in the church yard.

But that this Spirit speaking without us may be beneficial to us, there must be something within us, which also we call the spirit; and this is twofold; for either it signifies a secret illapse, or supernatural influence of God upon the hearts of men, by which he is supposed inwardly to incline, inform and direct men in their ways and wills, and to preserve them from sin and mistake; or else it signifies that in us, which is opposed against the flesh, and which denominates us spiritual men, and by which we are said "to walk according to the Spirit;" that which St. Paul means, when he tells us, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that we may not do what we list." Gal. v. 17. Now of these two, the former it is which the church seems to appeal unto, in determining controversies by way of council. But to this I have little to say; *first*, because I know not whether there be any such thing yea or no; *secondly*, because experience shews, that the pretence of the Spirit in this sense is very dangerous, as being next at hand to give countenance to imposture and

abuse ; which is a thing sufficiently seen, and acknowledged both by the Papist and Protestant party ; as it appears by this, that though both pretend unto it, yet both upbraid each other with the pretence of it. But the Spirit, in the second sense, is that I contend for ; and this is nothing but reason illuminated by revelation out of the written word. For when the mind and spirit humbly conform and submit to the written will of God, then you are properly said to have the Spirit of God, and to walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. This alone is that spirit which preserves us from straying from the truth ; for he indeed that hath the Spirit, errs not all ; or if he do, it is with as little hazard and danger as may be ; which is the highest point of infallibility, which either private persons or churches can arrive to. Yet would I not have you to conceive that I deny, that at this day the Holy Ghost communicates himself to any in this secret and supernatural manner, as in foregoing times he had been wont to do ; indeed my own many uncleannesses are sufficient reasons to hinder that good Spirit to participate himself unto me after that manner. The Holy Ghost was pleased to come down like a dove ;

———Veniunt ad candida tecta columbae ;
Accipiet nullas sordida turris aves.

Now it is no reason to conclude the Holy Ghost imparts himself in this manner to none, because he hath not done that favour unto me. But thus much I will

say, that the benefit of that sacred influence is confined to those happy souls in whom it is, and cannot extend itself in the church in public. And if any Catholic except against you for saying so, warrant yourself and me out of Aquinas, whose words are these ; *Innititur fidei natura revelationi Apostolis et Prophetis factae, qui canonicos libros Scripserunt ; non autem revelationi, siqua fuit, aliis doctoribus factae.*

It being granted then that churches can err, it remains then, in the *second* place, to consider how far they may err. I answer for churches, as I did before for private persons ; churches may err in fundamentals if they list, for they may be heretical ; for churches may be wicked, they may be idolaters, and why then not heretical ? Is heresy a more dangerous thing than idolatry ? For whereas it is pleaded, that churches cannot fall into heresy, because of that promise of our Saviour, “ That the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church,” Matt. xvi. 18, it is but out of mistake of the meaning of that place ; and indeed I have often mused how so plain a place could so long and so generally be misconstrued. To secure you, therefore, that you be not abused with these words hereafter, (for they are often quoted to prove the church’s infallibility,) I shall endeavour to give you the natural meaning of them ; for *πύλαι Ἰδου*, “ the gates of hell,” is an Hebraism ; for in the Hebrew expression, the gates of a thing signifies the thing it-

self, as the gates of Sion, Sion itself ; and by the same proportion, the gates of hell signifies hell itself. Now *Ἅδης*, which we English “hell,” as in no place of Scripture it signifies heresy, so very frequently in Scripture it signifies death, or rather the state of the dead, and is indifferently applied to good and bad. Let us then take the word in that meaning ; for what greater means can we have to warrant the signification of a Scripture word, than the general meaning of it in Scripture ? So that when our Saviour spake these words, he made no promise to the church of persevering in the truth ; but to those that did persevere in the truth, he made a promise of victory against death and hell. And what he there says, sounds to no other purpose but this ; that those who shall continue his, although they die, yet death shall not have the dominion over them ; but the time shall come, that the bands of death shall be broken ; and as Christ is risen, so shall they that are his rise again to immortality. For any help therefore that this text affords, churches may err in fundamentals.

But to speak the truth, I much wonder, not only how any churches, but how any private man, that is careful to know and follow the truth, can err in fundamentals ; for since it is most certain, that the Scripture contains at least the fundamental parts of Christian faith, how is it possible that any man, that is careful to study and believe the Scripture, should be ignorant of any necessary part of his faith ? Now

whether the church of Rome err in fundamentals, yea or no; to answer this, I must crave leave to use this distinction; To err in fundamentals is either to be ignorant of, or deny something to be fundamental that is, or to entertain something for fundamental which is not. In the first sense, the church of Rome, entertaining the Scriptures as she doth, cannot possibly be ignorant of any principal part of the Christian faith; all her error is in entertaining in herself, and obtruding upon others a multitude of things for fundamentals, which no way concern our faith at all. Now how dangerous it is thus to do, except I know whether she did this willingly or wittingly, yea or no, is not easy to define; if willingly she doth it, it is certainly high presumption; if ignorantly, I know not what mercies God hath in store for them, that sin not out of malicious wickedness.

Now concerning the merriment newly started, I mean the requiring of a catalogue of fundamentals, I need to answer no more, but what Abraham tells the rich man in hell, "they have Moses and the prophets,"* the Apostles and the Evangelists, let them seek them there; for if they find them not there, in vain shall they seek them in all the world besides. But yet to come a little nearer to the particulars; if the church of Rome would needs know what is fundamental in our conceit, and what not; the answer, as

* Luke, xiv. 29.

far as myself in person am concerned in the business, shall be no other than this ; Let her observe what points they are wherein we agree with her, and let her think, if she please, that we account of them as fundamentals, especially if they be in the Scriptures ; and on the other hand, let her mark in what points we refuse communion with her, and let her assure herself we esteem those as no fundamentals. If she desire a list and catalogue made of all those, she is a leisure enough, for ought I know, to do it herself.

Last of all, concerning the imputation of rebellion and schism against church authority, with which your Catholic disputant meant to affright you, all that is but merely powder without shot, and can never hurt you ; for since it hath been sufficiently evidenced unto us, that the church of Rome hath adulterated the truth of God, by mixing with it sundry inventions of her own, it was the conscience of our duty to God that made us to separate ; for where the truth of God doth once suffer, their union is conspiracy, authority is but tyranny, and churches are but routs. And suppose we, that we mistook, and made our separation upon error, the church of Rome being right in all her ways, though we think otherwise, yet could not this much prejudice us ; for it is schism upon wilfulness that brings danger with it ; schism upon mistake, and schism upon just occasion, hath in itself little hurt, if any at all.

ON
ECCLESIASTICAL
JURISDICTION.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

I TAKE it for a maxim that all Jurisdiction is civil. By jurisdiction I understand all power to make law, to command, to convene, to null, to restrain, to hear and determine doubts, and other things of like quality. Now, whereas we hear often mention made of Ecclesiastical authority, and speak of it as a thing distinct from civil, we must know that it is but an error of common speech ; for indeed Ecclesiastical authority is nothing but some part of civil government, committed to the managing of Ecclesiastical persons ; and if we should conceive, (a thing which may and doth come to pass,) some part of authority delegated either to a merchant, or physician, or grammarian, or geometrician, we might, by as good analogy, denominate it by an epithet derived from the profession or quality of the person that bears it. For to think that

either by divine or natural, or other original right, any point of authority beyond *ελεξον, επιτιμήσον, παρακάλεσον*, be annexed to the ministry of preaching the Gospel, is but an error, though, perhaps, it be both common and ancient. The Author and first preachers of our faith neither claimed nor practised any such thing. But, by consent of Christians, whether upon supposition of their integrity, or for the honour of the ministry, or for what other cause I know not, coercive authority, and power to meddle in seculars, hath been committed to the preachers of the Gospel. First, by ordaining sundry clergy degrees, and subordinating the one unto another. Secondly, by subjecting the laity, in some cases, to their courts, and impropriating certain pleas to their cognizance. Thirdly, by giving way to clerks to end cause by appeal, compromise, umpirage, or the like, as appears in that title of the first book of the Code, *De Episcopali Audientia*. Further than all this, princes have thought good to employ in business of higher nature, as embassages, and the like, as our books shew us that Ambrose was sent ambassador by Gratian the Emperor to Eugenius. And, if we look to latter times, we shall see the highest places of the kingdom, as the chancellorship, treasurership, &c. managed by cardinals, bishops, and canons of churches; yea, poor Capuchin friars, Father Ney and Father Joseph, have been thought the fittest instruments for treaties and secret councils of the highest nature.

Now I perceive your curiosity inclines you to inquire, upon what good policy this was done, and how princes and ecclesiastical persons may interchangeably serve themselves one of another, mutually to advance each other's ends ; the prince of his clergy by using them to bow the hearts of his people to his will, or by giving honour to them, so to bias his secular nobility. The clergy again of the prince, by gaining, through his countenance, estimation among the people, by raising themselves in wealth, honours, and promotions. This is a speculation which I never studied, because I never delighted in it. Foreign countenance and favour is but a staff unto the lame, and those who fail of inward strength ; resolution, virtue, sanctity are the true means to gain authority and respect unto the clergy ; so they be well supported by these, it is not material though they never see the inside of the court, or with poor Mycillus in Lucian, they know not whether a penny be square or round. After that the world and outward state began to side with the church, that fell out which St Jerom complained of, *Potentia et divitiis major facta est, virtutibus minor*. And indeed to teach the clergy a way to comply with princes, is the directest means to produce the same effect. If in this point I satisfy not your expectation, you must remember the oracle, *Male respondent coacta ingenia*.

Now whereas to strengthen yourself as you hoped, and to draw me on to a liking of intercourse betwixt

princes and priests, you have drawn some testimonies out of Isidorus Pelusiota and Pope Leo, I would willingly speak a little unto them, but for Isidore, I am bound to keep silence, for I know not where to find the text you quote, and the words seem to me too secular than to proceed from so abstracted a person. As for Leo's smooth assertion, you must consider who speaks what. He was a vain ambitious person, every where cracking of the pre-eminence of his chair, casting about to bring all bishops' causes to his cognizance, oiling himself with fond pretences of Peter's power, and Peter's pre-eminence, so to abuse the name of that great Apostle to further his vain ambition. Hence came that fond speculation, that the world's safety and good could not consist, if prince and priest conspire not in defence of Christ. For what means he by the world's good? The flourishing and gilded estate of men in peace and prosperity? Like enough he did; for by his pulse I perceive he was inclinable enough to dote on such painted trumpery. Or did he mean the dispersion and propagating of Christian religion, which is indeed the greatest good that ever befell the world? If he did so, as indeed he should have done, then hath he abused you with a gross falshood. For cast back your eye upon the times foregoing Christianity, when the crown and the mitre, as you speak, were at defiance, and you shall see with your eyes that Christianity increased and spread itself through Europe, Afric, and Asia, in

far greater proportion in 300 years before that prince, than it hath done in 1300 years since.

If you wonder at this conclusion, you will much more wonder at the reason. You conceive that peace is a great friend to the propagation of the Gospel; deceive not yourself; this commendation belongs to persecution. Peace bribes men, and makes them delight in house and home; persecution occasions dispersion, and dispersion spreads the Gospel. You may see in the Acts of the Apostles, that whilst the Apostles and brethren had peace, the Gospel went not out of the gates of Jerusalem; but when, by reason of persecution raised upon the death of Stephen, men dispersed and shifted for themselves, then preached they the Gospel to the neighbouring cities, to which they fled for safety. Those troublesome and tempestuous times, before Constantine constrained good men to fly from city to city, from country to country, who endeavouring to persuade all with whom they could acquaint themselves, in so short a space spread the Gospel in so large a compass, as that so many ages since have added little in proportion to it. *Nihil interest Evangelii quam bene quam male inter se conveniat principibus et presbyteris, interest principum ut Evangelio faveant.* Assure yourself, deep discourse of mutual intercourse and interchange of good offices, betwixt kings and priests, are but politic essays helping forward not the Gospel of Christ, but the avarice and ambition of clergymen.

PROSPERITY
OF THE WICKED.

FROM A SERMON ON THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS.

THAT we may a little the better content ourselves, and know in what case we stand, give me leave to shew you, how it comes about, that the wicked, though they have no promise, yet have a larger portion of the the world's blessings than the godly ; where it shall appear, that it cannot otherwise be, except it should please God to alter the ordinary course of the world.

The first cause, therefore, that the sons of this world thus usually climb aloft above the sons of God, and nest themselves in the tallest cedars, is their infinite and importunate ambition. From this root hath sprung forth both that infinite mass of wealth which private men, and that boundless compass of government which great princes, have attained unto. Nothing was ever more unjust than the raising of these great king-

doms; and if the laws of equity and moderation might have taken place, they had never been. St Austin saw no difference between the Roman empire, and Spartacus' conspiracy, only the one lasted a little longer,* and this makes no difference in the thing itself. And hence it is that God gave limits and bounds unto the kingdom which his people had; and having poured out the phials of his wrath upon the usurping people, that held the land of promise from them to whom it was due, he permitted not the Jews to grate too much upon the bordering nations. And this is the reason why the Jews, that in all other respects went side by side, or rather before the rest of the world, only in latitude of kingdom yielded to the monarchs of the earth. For the one made the will of God, the other their own ambition, the measure of their desires.

The most moderate, and wisest kind of men are many times slowest in giving entertainment to these great thoughts of heart. In Jotham's parable in the book of Judges, ix. 8, where the trees go forth to chuse a king, the olive would not leave his fatness, nor the vine his fruit, nor the fig tree his sweetness, no, not for a kingdom; only the briar, the basest of all shrubs, no sooner had the trees made the motion to him, but he is very apprehensive of it, and thinks himself a goodly creature, fit to make a king of. Sober men, who best understand the nature of

* De Civitate Dei lib. iv. c. 4. 5.

business, know well how great a charge extraordinary wealth and places of authority bring with them. There is none so poor, but hath his time to make an account of; were there nothing but this, what a sum would this amount unto? Add unto these, our words; unto words, actions; unto all these wealth and ability; and, last of all, honour and authority; how does each of these successively, like places in arithmetic, infinitely increase the sum of our accounts? No marvel then, if wise and considerate men are slow in tasking themselves so heavily, and rather content themselves quietly at home; let the world go well or ill, so it be not long with them.

The second thing that makes them come on in the world, is their spacious, wide, and unlimited conscience, which can enlarge itself to the swallowing of any means, that bring gain and preferment with them; he that once hath cauterized and seared his conscience, and put on a resolution to gain by all occasions, must needs quickly grow rich. But good men are evermore shy and scrupulous what they do, though there be no apparent occasion. Evil is of a sly insinuating nature, it will creep in at every little passage, all the care and wariness we can possibly use to prevent it is too little. When David had cut off the lap of Saul's garment, the Scripture tells us, that "his heart smote him because he had done this thing." 1 Sam. xxiv. 5. I have often wondered with myself, what it was that (in an action so innocent and harmless, done with so

honourable intent, only to bring a testimony of his innocency and righteousness,) might thus importunately trouble his conscience; he intended no wrong unto Saul, not so much as in his thought; yet had he but a little advised himself, through scruple and tenderness of conscience, he would not have used so harmless a witness of his innocency. Common reason told St Paul, that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and by instinct of the Holy Ghost, himself learned, and taught, that it was but justice and equity, that men that labour in the Gospel should live by the Gospel. "Who feeds a flock, eats not the milk, and clothes not himself with the wool of it?" 1 Cor. ix. 7. Yet, notwithstanding, that he might take away all occasion of evil, that lazy and idle drones, who suck the sweet of other men's labours, might not take example by him to live at other men's cost; that he might make the Gospel free, without any charge, that men that have no silver might come, and buy, and eat; might come, I say, and buy the wine and milk of the word without money, that the Gospel might not be slandered, as a means of gain, he would not use that liberty that God and men gave him; neither would he eat the milk, or wear the wool of his own flock, but with his own hands and labours purchased himself his necessary maintenance.

What hope of these men's extraordinary thriving, who are so nice and scrupulous of what they finger? What then must we think of those, that abuse godli-

ness unto gain, that refuse to do deeds of charity, except they bring them in some revenue ; that read Scripture for no other purpose, but to cull out some thrifty texts to pretend unto their covetousness and distrust, as that charity begins from itself, that " he is worse than an infidel that provides not for his family ?" 1 Tim. v. 8. But as for those other Scriptures, that persuade us to be open handed, to " lend, looking for nothing again," Luke vi. 34, having two coats, to part with him that hath none ; Luke iii. 11, these we can gently pass by as meteors, and airy speculations, and we think we have done God and men good service, when we have invented some shifting interpretation, to put them and remove them out of the way. When Azahel, wounded by Abner, lay in the way wallowing in his own blood, the people which followed after Abner stood still, as they came to Azahel, till he was removed out of the way.* Men are willing to be Christians, and yet unwilling to leave the thriving courses which the world takes, when in their pursuit of gain, they meet with these or the like places of holy Scripture, cannot choose but be much amused, and stand still, as it were, at Azahel's body. Now those, that have been the authors of certain mollifying paraphrases and distinctions, and the like, have removed

* The author quotes from memory. The history to which he alludes is that of Amasa, murdered by Joab. 2 Sam. xx. 12, 13.

these harsher places of Scripture, as it were Azahel's body, and made the way open and clear to our covetous desires.

How scrupulous our forefathers were in expounding of these, or the like texts of Scripture, themselves have left us notable monuments. St Basil makes a strange supposition, and to it gives as strange an answer. Wert thou brought, saith he, unto those streights, that thou hadst but one loaf of bread left, and that thou knewest no means to provide other when that is spent, if there should come some poor and needy man, and ask thee food, what thinkest thou is thy duty to do? Even to take that one loaf, and put it into the hands of him that requires it, and, looking up unto heaven, say, Lord, thou seest this one loaf, thou knowest the streights in which I am, and that there is no other means but thy providence; yet have I preferred the keeping of thy commands before mine own necessities.* Beloved, this is a point of piety; I should scarcely durst to have taught it, had I not had the warrant of so grave a man. For in this age we are taught, that we must begin from ourselves, that we must not tempt God by making ourselves destitute of means, and other such thriving doctrines, which strongly savour of love unto the world, and distrust in God's promises. There may be many reasons of mollifying some texts of Scripture, and re-

* Hom. in Famem. §. 6.

straining them ; but, amongst those, let that be the last, which is drawn from our commodity ; and, so there be no other cause to hinder, let not respect to our persons, or to our purses, restrain any Scripture from that latitude and compass of sense, of which it is naturally capable.

EXTENT
OF THE
PROFIT OF GODLINESS.

FROM A SERMON ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

WE are now to consider the latitude, extent, and largeness of this profit of godliness. "Godliness is profitable unto all things." They that have written in praise of music, have much admired it, for that great sympathy and correspondence which it holds with man's nature ; that it so applies itself to all occasions, that whether a man be alone or in company, whether sad or merry, whether at his devotion or at his sports, in what estate soever he be, music is still seemly and fitting. Certainly then is godliness wonderfully harmonical, wonderfully musical, that doth so easily accomodate and fit itself to all persons, all estates, all degrees, all sexes, all ages, all actions whatsoever.

First, the arts of this world are, by God's providence, so divided, that they must of necessity belong only to some ; all the world cannot be practitioners in any one of them. If all were husbandmen, what would become of the merchant's trade ? If all were merchants, where were the scholar ? The profit of every one of these may, peradventure, redound to many, the skill necessarily resides in few ; and let us suppose all to be professors of any one, the profit of that must needs perish. But this wonderful art of godliness is of an higher nature, and hath a kind of metaphysical community ; it must descend unto all particulars ; we must, if we will have any profit by it, be all professors of it.

Secondly, few or no arts are there in the world, that are befitting both sexes ; some are well befitting men, but are utterly unfit for women. To go abroad, to handle the sword, to mannage foreign matters, this belongs unto the man ; but to keep home, handle the distaff, to manage the business of the family, these belong unto the woman. But for the profession and practice of piety, "womankind," saith St Basil, "are as far forth capable of it as men are."* And Gregory Nyssen tells us, that in prayer, and fasting, and other exercises of godliness, there have been women found, who have far surpassed men.

* *Ὁμοίως δέκτικον τὸ θεῖον τῷ ἀρρένι.* This sentiment is to be found in St Basil's Commentary upon the first Psalm.

Thirdly, in the world arts and professions are to be distributed amongst men according to their several complexions, as it were, and constitutions of men's wits. Every temper of nature fits not every profession, as every soil will not bring forth all kind of seeds. And hence it is, that those, who have delivered unto us their opinions concerning the institution of youth, have advised men warily to observe, towards what profession or trade their nature leans, and to build upon this as upon a foundation. All this labour of examining and trying men's capacities and constitutions in the business of piety is at an end. For there is no constitution, no temper of nature unapt to receive impression from it. There is no nature so stubborn, no wit so weak and silly, but can make a perfect Christian, and quickly, by the help of the grace of God, inwardly working with it, believe and understand the darkest mysteries of godliness. The reason of this difference is evident. For man's art cannot alter the nature of the subject on which he works; and therefore if he cannot do what he would, he must content himself to do that which the matter upon which he works will give him leave. As the sun which warms the earth gives nothing unto it, only stirs up the nature and faculty it finds in it, and so makes it bring forth fruit; so good education in any art, if it find a nature fit to receive and entertain it, it will cause it, as it were, to bud, and blossom, and bring forth fruit; but give, or infuse, or make a nature, it cannot. But

the Holy Spirit of God, where it pleases him to sow the seed of grace, doth alter the very complexion and nature of the soil, and were our hearts as hard as flint, or as barren as the sand, he can make them as soft as wax, and as fertile as Canaan, or the paradise of God. "Create a new heart within me," saith the psalmist, Ps. li. 10. The conversion of a sinner is a kind of degree of creation. But I must proceed.

Fourthly, Aristotle discoursing concerning the fit hearer and learner of moral and civil virtues, quite excludes youth, as utterly unfit for any such drift and end. And why? He is yet forsooth impatient of admonition, hot in passion; when these things are calmed and allayed, then is he fit wax to receive the impression of natural instruction.* But him, whom the school of nature hath thus excluded, the school of grace and piety hath especially made choice of. "From a child to have known the Scriptures." 2 Tim. iii. 15. "Suffer young children to come unto me." Matt. xix. 14. "He that receives not the kingdom of Heaven like a young child." Mark x. 15. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" Ps. cxix. 9. Many more testimonies of Holy Scripture, which plainly declare unto us, that youth is the fittest subject to receive the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit of God. Let the passions of youth rage never so violently, let him as much contemn and

* Ethic. Nicom. lib. i. c. 3.

set at nought the good and grave advice of his ancients, as ever Rehoboam did; yet God, that sits upon the floods, and gives them laws, and tames them, can bridle the unruliest passion of the most disorderly young man, and make him like unto young Joseph or Daniel.

Fifthly, Old men are very unfit learners of the lessons which the world teacheth, and almost impossible it is for a man to begin to study in his age. Therefore opsimathy, which is too late beginning to learn, was counted a great vice, and very unseemly amongst moral and natural men. For the longer we defer, the more unapt still we grow, our senses wax duller, our memory frailer, yea, our understanding too will sensibly decay. But in the school of Christ, none is too old to learn, no memory too short to remember his duty; no disgrace, no unseemliness, even for old men to come to school. For the Spirit of God strengthens the memory, softens the brain, supplies all defects that age brings with it, and makes it, were it as dry as Aaron's rod, to bud and blossom, and bring forth ripe fruit unto righteousness. When David in the book of Kings, had invited old Barzillai to the court, Barzillai, who had so kindly entertained him, when he fled from his ungracious son, he excuses himself unto the king, by reason of his age, his taste fails him, his hearing is gone, he hath lost all sense of court delights and pleasures; and therefore he requests that favour for his young son Chimham,

as a fitter person to make a courtier. "I am this day," saith Barzillai, "fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burthen to my lord the king? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in my own city, and be buried in the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold, thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee." 2 Sam. xix. 35—38. Thus indeed it is in the courts of earthly princes, men, by age, do grow unserviceable and cumbersome, and therefore there is a time for them to retire.

The counsel, which Quintilian gives his Orator, "to resign and give over whilst as yet he is serviceable*," belongs especially unto courtiers; best for them to resign their places with honour, whilst yet they are able to do service, lest, if they stay till age hath made them unserviceable, they may peradventure be forced unto it with disgrace. But in the court of Christ, none is too old to do service, there is no difference betwixt Barzillai and Chimham, their strength and senses are alike. Fourscore years could impair Barzillai's taste and hearing, but the spiritual taste and hearing, no age or length of days can make decay. It were to be wished, that in our youngest days, we would dedicate ourselves unto God's service, that we

* *Desinere cum desideraremur.* Inst. Grat. lib. ii. c. 12.

would think of that counsel, which Seneca gave his friend Lucilius, “On, betimes, and make haste, lest that befall you which hath befallen me, To learn in your age.”* But if the grace of God shine not on us, till the last hour of our day, yet as the husbandman in the Gospel gives unto the last as unto the first, so will God give unto the eldest as unto the youngest; their strength and ability, as far as Christ’s service requires it, shall return unto them again; as the flesh of Naaman, after his leprosy, “became unto him again as the flesh of a little child.” 2 Kings v. 14.

Sixthly, The arts of the world seem to be somewhat of an unsociable disposition, they hinder one another; and a very hard thing it is to learn, and practise perfectly more than one. The mind of a man, distracted amongst many things, must needs entertain them brokenly and imperfectly. But piety is of a more pliable nature; no art, no profession, no trade whatsoever, unto which the learning and continual practice of piety can be any hinderance. He, that studieth piety alone all his days, shall find in it more than all the time he hath can bring to perfection. And yet the most troublesome arts that are, which take up and exact of us most part of our time, leave time enough for the learning of this sacred art. As it was with those who gathered manna, “He that gathered little, had no want; and he that gathered much, had

* *Perge, mi Lucili, et propera, ne tibi accidat quod mihi, ut senex discas. Epist. ad Lucil. lxxvi.*

nothing over ; every man gathered his omer full according to his eating ;” Exod. xvi. 18 ; so is it in the gathering of this spiritual manna, he that spends all his time in it, and seems to gather much, gathers only his omer full, as much only as is sufficient for his spending ; and he that is necessarily detained with other cares of his life by some trade, or some other vocation whatsoever, and seems to gather less, gathers notwithstanding his omer full too, even that which is sufficient for his use. No arts there are that do so wholly take up the mind of man, as that they leave no room for any other thought. The experience of tradesmen themselves doth witness thus much unto us, who in the midst of their most serious business and labour, can talk, and sing, and make themselves merry, and by this means deceive the time, and ease themselves something of the burthen of their labours. Even here is space enough for the practice of godliness. For why cannot as well a prayer, and holy meditations, take up the rooms of these idle thoughts and talk ? Certainly it is an hallowing of actions to distinguish them, and intersperse amongst them good and pious meditations. So that for the practice of piety, it is not always necessary for you to lay down your work, to come to church and solemn service, or still to use some such form as suffers you to do nothing else ; but you may very well do it as you walk in the streets, as you stand at the stalls, as you sit at your shop-boards, and make every

place a church where you are. It is St Jerom's in his xvii Epistle; "The husbandman, as he holds the plough, may sing an hallelujah; the sweating harvest-man may cool and refresh himself with a psalm; the gardener, whilst he prunes his vines and arbours, may record some one of David's sonnets.*" So that as the Jews report of manna, that it had not one kind of savour with all men, but was in taste unto every man like unto that which he best liked; so piety fits itself, as it were, unto every man's palate; and look what it is which he hath been bred up in, or best likes, piety will become like unto it, and taste as he would have it. * * *

Therefore, as the Scripture tells us of Joseph, that wheresoever, or with whomsoever he conversed, he brought a blessing with him; when he was in Potiphar's house, he brought a blessing upon Potiphar's house; when he went into the prison, he brought a blessing with him to the prison; when he went into Pharaoh's house he brought a blessing upon it, and upon all the land of Egypt. So piety doubtless, wheresoever it walketh, leaves a blessing behind it, as the hare leaves the scent of her footing.

Did piety afford us nothing else but its company, brought it no improvement to our estate, but only taught us to be content with it, whatsoever it be, yet

* *Arator stivam tenens hallelujah decantat; sudans messor psalmis sese evocat; et curva attendens falce vites vinitor aliquid Davidicum canit.*

this where profit enough if men could see it. But because profit and gain is that, which the world so much doats on, and hard, if not impossible, it is to wean men from the love of it, it hath pleased God to annex unto piety such a force, that it shall increase and enhance what estate soever it shall apply itself unto. When Cyrus the king was gathering his army, he made a proclamation to this effect. That who-soever would put himself into his service, should doubtless find a great advancement of his estate; were he possessor of a little manor, he would make him governor of a city; were he the governor of a city, he would make him lord of a province; were he lord of a province, he would make him a king of many nations. This which here our Apostle tells us, that "godliness is profitable," that "godliness is profitable to all things," is indeed the very drift of his proclamation. For it gives us to understand, that look what estate it is, to which piety adjoins itself, it shall receive not only security, but even great increase and improvement from it. Thus hath appeared unto you, both the profit that comes by godliness, and likewise the exceeding largeness and compass of the profit.

But for our further instruction, something yet is there, by occasion of this text, farther to be learned. For lest any man of upright life and conversation, should upon the reading of this, or the like texts of Scripture, forthwith expect, that the world should

come in upon him, that he should receive grace, and honours, and preferments; and finding himself to fail in his expectation, and instead of all these, to meet with disgrace and reproach, should begin to call in question the truth of these promises, and charge God foolishly, let us a little consider the nature of God's promises in this kind. Wherefore we are to note, that God although he be a most free and liberal giver, yet notwithstanding, most of his promises are conditional. "The gift of God is eternal life," saith St Paul, Rom. vi. 23. Salvation is a mere and free gift; yet nevertheless, God gives it to none but to those that live either uprightly or penitently. As it is with the things of the life to come, so is it much more with the things of this life; they are a mere donative, a gift, an alms; and wheresoever God bestows them, he bestows them freely. For do we all we can do, yet is not God a debtor to us for the least and meanest temporal blessing. And it is not to be thought, that he that out of his mere grace and liberality gives us heaven, a thing of that inestimable value, would set a price upon the things of this life, and so sell them unto us, which are indeed things of no worth at all.

Yet, notwithstanding, he gives them not, no not to those that are his, without condition. It is worth nothing, which St Basil hath, "As farmers, and tenants, that rent lands of other men, till the ground according to the will of him that lets it them; so the care

and manage of this flesh of ours is committed unto us upon obligation, upon indenture or lease," that so husbanding this flesh of ours, according to the conditions upon which it is let us, we may make it fruitful unto him that let it. Not our flesh only, but all things that pass between God and us are upon conditions, they are let unto us by indenture. Let us therefore like careful tenants, look into our lease, and see what conditions they are, which God requires at the hand of those, who look to take of God the things of this world, who claim a promise of him of the things of this life. These shall not find in other places of Scripture, where the same doctrine is taught, but with some restraint, which here the Holy Ghost seems to deliver absolutely. For this is the best way of interpreting of Scriptures, when as what is in one place briefly and concisely delivered, is expounded, by another place, where it is more largely taught.

As in all other business, so in this great business of Christianity, we may not think that we may huddle up matters as we list ; but we must hold on in a way, we must keep a method and order, a set course in our proceedings. Not, first, these things, and then the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of him ; but, first, the kingdom of God , and then these things. We have amongst our books an author, who commending unto us the great use of method and order in our studies, tells us, that if a man could assure himself thirty years of study, it would be far more

profitable for him to spend twenty of them in finding out some course and order of study, and the other ten in studying according to this order, than to spend the whole, though it be in very diligent study, if it be with disorder and confusion. Howsoever it may be with method and order in these academical studies, certainly in our studies which concern the practice of Christianity, it cannot chuse but be with great loss of labour and industry, if we do not observe that method and order, which here our Saviour prescribes.

Simplicius, in his comments upon Aristotle, makes a question, Whether youths in their reading of Aristotle's books, should begin with his logics, where he teaches them to dispute and reason; or with his moral books, where he teaches them to live civilly and honestly. If, saith he, they begin from his logic without morals, they were in danger to prove wrangling sophisters; if from his morals without logic, they would prove confused. Thus indeed it fares in the knowledge of nature, where all things are uncertain; thus it is with students in the university, who have Aristotle for their god. Scarcely will at all their logic do them so much service, as to shew them where they would begin, or where end. But in the studies of Christianity, it is nothing so. Christ is our Aristotle, he hath written us a spiritual logic, he hath shewed us a method and order, what first to do, what next, and how to range every thing in its proper place. He, that shall follow this, may be secure of

his end ; it is impossible he should lose his pains. But if we follow our own conceits, if we like best of our own courses, God deals with us no otherwise than parents do with their children ; for so long as children follow the direction and advice of their parents, so long it is fit that their parents should provide for them ; but if once children like best of their own courses, then it is but meet they should take the event and fortune of them. Yea, so much the more dangerous is our error, of not observing the order and method that Christ hath given us, because it cannot afterward be remedied, we have forever lost the claim to God's promises in this kind. As Cato said of errors committed in battle, " Errors in other things may be again amended, but the errors of a battle cannot possibly be remedied, because the inconvenience immediately follows upon the mistake."* For if we have not observed this method of our Saviour, if any thing have possessed our thoughts, before or above the thought, study, and care of godliness, we have missed of our method, we have broken our condition, and therefore now forever can we claim no promise of God in this kind.

Here therefore is a most certain touch, by which we may come to examine our claim unto these promises ; for if at any time we shall perceive our-

* In aliis rebus si quid erratum est, potest postmodum corrigi, praeliorum delicta emendationem non recipiunt, cum poena statim sequatur errorem. Veget. l. i. c. 13.

selves overtaken with passion and discontent, upon consideration that we be disgraced and impoverished, when as men, who, as we suppose, have nothing so much care of God, and the things that are his, do flourish in the grace and favour with the world; let us presently examine ourselves, whether or no we have kept the conditions; viz. sought first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of him? Or have given somewhat else the first room in our thoughts? Thus if we do, our own conscience will presently tell us, what part we have in these promises. For which of us can say, that, with Samuel, we have been dedicated to God from our first and tender infancy? What do I say? From our first? Nay how many of us are there, who can scarcely spare the latter end of our days for God?

When the world hath croot the prime of our age, of our labour, of our industry; when it hath sifted and bolted out the flour, when our health and youth are spent in the world's service, with much ado can we be content to bestow our old, decrepit, sickly, and unprofitable part of our age upon God, and the study of Godliness? How then can we claim the promise at God's hands, who have thus grossly neglected our conditions? To conclude. When God, in the book of Kings, made a covenant with Solomon, he tells plainly what he and his people must trust to. "If thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and uprightness, to do ac-

cordingly to all I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments; then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying *There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.* But if you shall at all turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments, and my statutes, which I have set before, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel shall be a proverb, and a byeword among all people." 1 Kings ix. 4—7. Here are threats as well as promises, and those promises are conditional. It is but just, that they who claim the promises, look well and truly to the conditions.





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